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OUTCAST

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REVIEWS  
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upgrade time  
...again?

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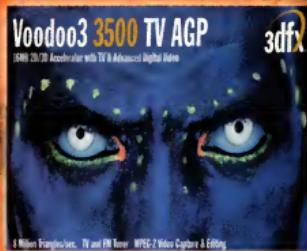


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World exclusive! An in-depth review of the sequel everyone's been waiting for, as well as tons of tips and tricks. Plus, what happens when terrorists stop being polite and start getting real? "The Real World: Kosovo"

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What happens when hundreds of gaming geeks go to Texas for a Quake fest? (They stick close together so they won't get beat up.) QuakeCon '99: The conference, the mods, and the latest on *Quake III Arena*



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With the football season upon us, we add exploding balls (Ouch! FOOTballs, perv) and other kooky stuff to our great American pastime to make it even better. Plus, *NFL Fever 2000* — does it compete with *Modden*, or not make the final cut?

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How to stop worrying and love the mods. PCXL pops in at the *Half-Life Mod Expo* and finds the best and brightest game conversions. Plus, an in-depth look at *Half-Life: Counterstrike*

## X-TRA

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*X-Trotainment Weekly* takes a swipe at the country's most popular entertainment rag, a frightening journey through *The Bad Disc Project*, how to fake it (gaming knowledge, you idiot), our very own Fantasy Quake II league, and tons of always-exciting gaming news



## ON THE COVER

And we thought faking tickets to get out of military service was a good idea! If we had known the armed services looked like this, we'd have gladly bolted from bed at 5:00 A.M. and listened to everything Sgt. Carter told us. Okay, so we were never in the military, but we watched "Gomer Pyle" and "Private Benjamin," at least enough to know the goofy dudes in those shows never looked like this month's cover model, Kristin Biggins. We'd run her obstacle course any time! Photographer: Ed Fox, Make-up: Josef Saunders

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Can we hold water? Can the French do anything right? Outcast buries a lot of our assumptions



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According to Salmon's Law, a licensed game from Acclaim will never get a good score. Wait, this got a what?



## 101 CORSAIRS

A yellowed-graphics, bad-music pirate game from the Frenchies — just what we've been waiting for



## CELEBRITY COUPLES THAT DIDN'T APPEAR, BUT REALLY WANTED TO...

Ralph Macchio and Pat Morris, Vanilla Ice and Ice-T, Milla and Vanilli (whatever one isn't dead), Scott Baio and Willow Ames, Corey Feldman and Corey Haim, Dennis and Austin Pendleton (their agent told us "death" was the reason they couldn't make it), McCormick and Tom Cruise, Rob Schneider and Tina Wright, Cheech and Chong, Eddie Murphy and Arsenio Hall, David Spade and unnamed fat co-star



## COLUMNS

## EDITOR'S LETTER 14

Deep, probing thoughts on marriage, the magazine, and whatever else Mike felt like writing. Read it just to keep him from whining, ok?

## FIRST PERSON B2

Are the new crop of 3D cards a great conspiracy aimed at emptying gamers' pockets? A foul-mouthed crank and a pie-eyed optimist (or two editors with nothing better to do) fight it out

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16 This month, wheel and deal through city streets with *Driver*, slash and dash through space with *Freespace 2*, and run and jump through a virtual world in the voxel-licious adventure game, *Outcast*. Plus, a special appearance by De La Soul

...the ghouls overwhelmed the hero, clubbing him with their own severed limbs before feasting on his guts. And that was right about the time we knew we couldn't wait to play Nocturne. This game will be causing some hellacious nightmares later this year."

- Computer Gaming World

"It is unforgettable, astonishing, and teeming with riveting visual realism. Yet behind the rich lighting and gossamer fog is a timeless sense of adventure. This is gaming at its best."

- Adrenaline Vault



It is 1955, and in the shadowed world around you there exists an ungodly evil: werewolves, vampires, ghouls and flesh-eating zombies that wait just outside the light's unlocked door to feed upon innocence. There also exist guardians of the good and just, tireless vigilantes capable of tracing down this evil and turning it upon itself. You are one of them. And you hunt, as your vile quarry does, by night.

# NOCTURNE

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## WARNING!

This game contains strong scenes of violence, language and nudity. Suitable for mature audiences only.

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Children stolen away. The sound of  
shrieking mothers still collapsing within  
themselves. Joy carried out with blunt, broken  
knives. Mercy bludgeoned. Hope suffocated.  
Blood sucked from heaven's eye.

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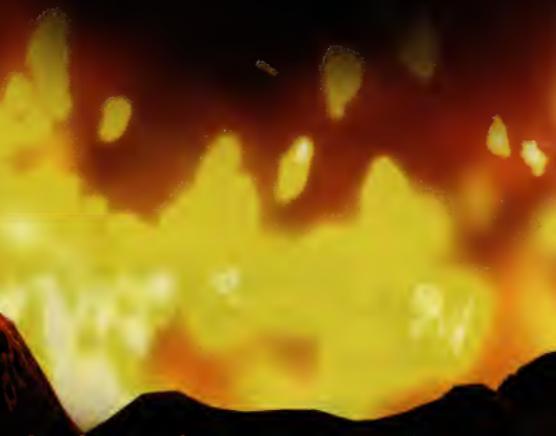
You are Locke D'Averam, a once proud warrior-prince executed for failing to perform a ritual sacrifice. 10,000 years later, you've been resurrected from the dead by a prominent warlord to rescue his kidnapped daughter.



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- ➌ Extensive NPC interaction enables you to discover who you once were
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And my Disc One spectacles  
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Always pushing that we've formed an image  
There's no need to lie  
When it comes to being Disc One  
It's just me, myself, and Disc

**DISC 2** → I'm proud of what I am  
Poems I speak are Disc Two type  
Please oh please let Disc Two be  
Himself, not what you read or write  
Right is wrong when hype is written  
On the Disc, De Lo that is,

Style is surely our own thing  
Not the false disguise of showbiz  
De Lo Disc is from the soul  
And this fact I can't deny  
Strictly from the Don called Stuckie  
And from me, myself, and Disc

## LEGEND

- ① DEMO
- ② PATCHES
- ③ TOOLS
- ④ A/U
- ⑤ MAPS
- ⑥ 7 RATING

## DISC

①	DRIVER
①	STAR WARS EPISODE 1: RACER
①	SINISTAR UNLEASHED
①	OUTCAST
①	FREESPACE 2
①	MIDTOWN MADNESS
④	KINGPIN
①	CUTTHROATS
①	SHADOW MAN
①	SEED
④	FORCE 21
④	BALDUR'S GATE: SWORD COAST
①	MORTYR
④	HALF-LIFE
④	GAMESPY

## DISC

①	ANACHRONOX
①	DAIKATANA
①	ABOMINATION
①	REVENANT
①	URBAN CHAOS
①	THIEF
①	OMIKRON
①	FORMULA 1
①	WARZONE 2100
①	BRAVEHEART
①	TOMB RAIDER III
①	TOMB RAIDER II
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①	TOMB RAIDER GOLD
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①	COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY



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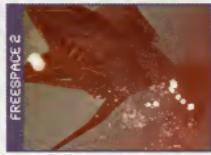
**Q:** Where's Francis?  
**A:** He's having his bath...

**Q:** On reality? Where are they hoising him down?

**Q:** Do you have any dreams, Pee-Wee?  
**A:** Yeah... I'm all alone. I'm rolling this big donut. And this snake wearing a vest comes along...

**Q:** The stars at night are big and bright...  
**A:** Deep in the heart of Texas!

**Q:** Is there something you can share with the rest of us, Amazing Larry??



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**PCXL NOTE:** Rogue Spear went gold the day that **PCXL** went to press. We played the final build extensively right before the master, and have reported on the issues we found with the game in this review. The multiplayer element was fully playable and tested thoroughly during the course of the review process.

# RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

# ROGUE SPEAR



Rogue Spear features excellent new locations.

**R**ed Storm, Rainbow Six, Rogue Spear — what's with the initials RS? Would we be talking Rotten or Righteous Sequel? What was it about the first game that captured the imagination and saw it dominate the sales charts for so long? Red Storm's track record up to that point had been, well, crap. The hugely bankable Tom Clancy name couldn't sell the board-game-style strategy bore *Politika*, or the online experiment *ruthless.com*. And the less said about *Dominant Species* the better. Rainbow Six, however, blew gamers away (including everyone in the PCXL office) with a new take on the first-person action game. With the sequel, Red Storm has many questions to answer. Can the graphics engine be improved? Will the enemy AI be smarter? What exactly is a rogue spear? (Help me, I can only talk in questions right now.) With all this on our minds, we invested countless hours unearthing the deepest secrets of Tom Clancy's *Rogue Spear*.

If you haven't played Rainbow Six at all, how it differs from a conventional first-person shooter can be summed up pretty quickly: It's not a first-person shooter. More than anything, it's a strategy game. Take the single-player game, for example. The game setup involves painstakingly coming up with a plan for your squad members (up to 16 on a single-player mission), who you insert into a 2D planning map and order around, giving them all sorts of movement waypoints and actions (such as cover, defend, and snipe). You then give them weapons and equipment, hit the "enter mission" key, and watch your terrorist-whacking magic unfold as you actively take the first-person role of one of the group members. Jumping into the body of another character should your view become splattered with your own blood and your lifeline go flat.

A few minutes later, it's all over. So the ratio of time spent in planning to execution is about 10 to 1. Of course, you don't have to play this way, but good luck getting through the later missions without evolving into a tactical mastermind. Strategy also comes into play when you realize that if you get hit by a bullet, you die (even though sometimes it seems you are only grazed). This doesn't seem too hard to wrap your mind around until you realize that you're used to taking a rocket in the face at point blank range in *Quake III* and living. Yeah, you'll be getting out of that Q3 mindset real soon, DeathLord. The game puts a premium on life — yours, that is. Right out of the gate you're more on edge than in infinite respawn shooters, because when people die so easy, the stakes are raised. You'll be much more careful and wary than you'd ever thought possible in a computer game, and that in itself is incredibly involving and reason enough to give this game a try. What other game lets you and a human opponent get into a shootout standoff right out of the movies, ducking behind cover, trading fire and grenades, and picking your opportunities. And one mistake, one head popped-up for too long, could trigger the foreboding "You're Dead" music.

**DEVELOPER** → Red Storm  
**PUBLISHER** → Red Storm  
**REQUIRED** → PII 233, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, D3D-compatible card  
**IDEAL** → PII 450, 128MB RAM, 600MB hard drive, Voodoo3 3500

## ACCELE-RATED

This game tends to run a bit chunky on some of the systems we tested it on. Really, you want to concentrate on speed over image quality.

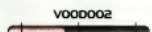
VOODOO3



TNT 2



VOODOO2



API SUPPORT: Direct3D

## STRIPPING IN REVERSE

## ALL NEW STUFF ... AND ... STUFF

**W**ithout getting too far ahead of ourselves, we should mention what exactly has been changed/improved since the first game. Everyone was hoping, if not exactly expecting, a spiffy new graphics engine. Well we didn't get one. Instead we get the same *Rainbow Six* engine that was already behind the tech curve when it first aired. The sequel sports some prettified surface changes like increased polys for the player models, higher res textures, and many more animations. 3D trees? It's all about the 3D trees.



The old "take one team at a time till they're all dead" approach.

Yeah, the engine is definitely showing its age. That's not to say that the game doesn't look good, because it does — like the first game, it makes up for a lack of polys and special effects with skillful use of texture maps. There's a ton of attention to detail in the game's 18 locations, in order to make them feel like the actual places they recreate, such as the gorgeous Prague Opera House, rather than anonymous levels in a game. Even places where the vast majority of players will never go because of a mission's flow, design, or whatever are carefully detailed — like a spare bedroom or a laundry room complete with washer and dryer.

The character models are looking better too — more fleshed out, with an increased poly count and all-new animations like using binoculars and signaling. Plenty of work has evidently gone into the varied death animations, many of which are as melodramatic as a soap opera. It can take a good five seconds for someone to spin around twice, fall on his knees, and slowly pitch forward. Uh, gee ... I just shot him in the leg.

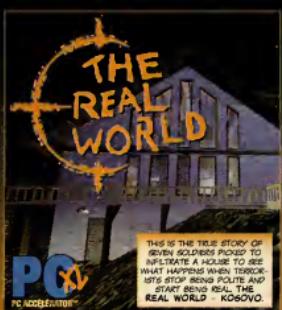
Whatever the inadequacies of the graphics engine in the original game, *Rainbow Six* was a shining example of how compelling gameplay can overcome technical limitations. How do you improve on that? You know it's about sneaking around, staying out of sight of the bad guys while picking them



Your snipers go into a sitting position instead of a crouch for some unknown reason.

off individually, one shot kills, etc. That's all good and feels exactly the same as it did in *R6*. With *Rogue Spear* two new actions add to your tactical possibilities: Moving while crouched and peeking around corners. [Check the sidebar for more details.] Moving while crouched is certainly a needed addition, as it makes you harder to hit, and you can run while crouched too. And, if you get the hostages to follow you in this mode, it's really funny 'cause it looks like they're following you around sniffing your butt.

Anyway ... peeking around corners is a great way of getting your face shot off, but has its uses, too. Of course there's a shitload of new guns, probably double the amount you could pick from in *R6*. Lots





more assault rifles like the futuristic Steyr Aug, and the automatic shotgun. [See sidebar right] But "new" doesn't necessarily mean "better," though, as you'll find yourself forsaking the fancy guns for the good old quiet HK MP5 SDs for most of the single-player missions because it's a headache having to worry about terrorists hearing you approach before they're supposed to.

Weapon accuracy, particularly when you're moving is either really annoying or really cool, depending on how you look at it. Basically, just like in R6, each weapon has a sort of refresh rate based on how maneuverable the weapon is and the skill of the user. So a heavy,

unwieldy weapon like an M16 will take a long time to get a "centered" shot, but the tradeoff is its much greater range for accurate shots. A smaller gun like an MP5 will center much faster, and handguns the fastest. By far the slowest to center are the new sniper rifles. These are a logical addition to the game and will affect your strategies significantly – both in single-player planning and in multiplayer map awareness. They zoom in from helluva far and can be incredibly deadly, but there's no silencer for the sniper rifle, which is pretty stupid (or a game balance decision, as silently picking people off from a distance could be massively annoying). ▶ p. 26



The attack on the Castle of Evil Badness.

## GEAR UP: WEAPONS AND ACCESSORIES

Here's a rundown of the new weapons and equipment in the game. For numbers in parentheses, first is the default number of clips, second is number of bullets per clip.



### RIFLES

**STYER AUG** → (5x30): A cool futuristic-looking assault rifle with bullpup design (trigger is in front of clip). Like all bullpup weapons, it's a maneuverable gun, but not that accurate.

**ENFIELD LB5As** → (5x30): Another funky bullpup assault rifle. This one just doesn't seem as good as the Steyr, however.

**M4 CARBINE** → (5x30): Basically the CAR 15 from the first game, a really versatile, powerful assault rifle and sure to be a multiplayer favorite. Great stopping power and accuracy.

**M14** → (5x20): An accurate, but slow vintage assault rifle. It's main drawback is it's low rounds per clip. Maybe good if you want to handicap yourself in multiplayer.

**UMP 45** → (5x25): A step up from the MP5 in firepower because of the .45 caliber rounds. It's got a slower fire rate, though. Also comes in a silenced version.

**HK MP5/s10A3** → (5x30): Just like the MP5, except it uses the slightly more powerful 5.56mm rounds. Also comes silenced.

**SPAS-12** → (3x9): A fully automatic combat shotgun that is capable of emptying its clip in less than 2 seconds. Aw yeah.

**OUR PICK OF THE ABOVE** → Single-player: MP5/s10A3, Adversarial: M4 Carbine

### SNIPER RIFLES

**BARRETT MODEL 82A1** → (2x10): Supposed to be the most powerful sniper rifle, but they all seem to get the job done pretty well ... this one seems to take the longest to center but has the most rounds per clip.

**PSG-1** → (4x5): Centers a bit quicker than the Barrett but doesn't zoom nearly as far and has less rounds per clip.

**WALTHER WA 2000** → (3x6): The quickest centering sniper with a decent zoom, probably the most practical in adversarial.

### ACCESSORIES

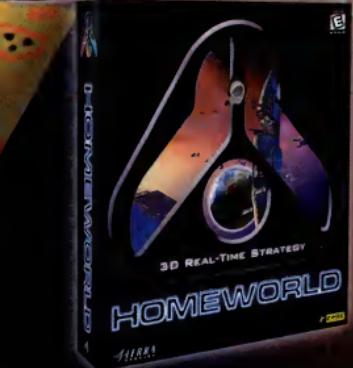
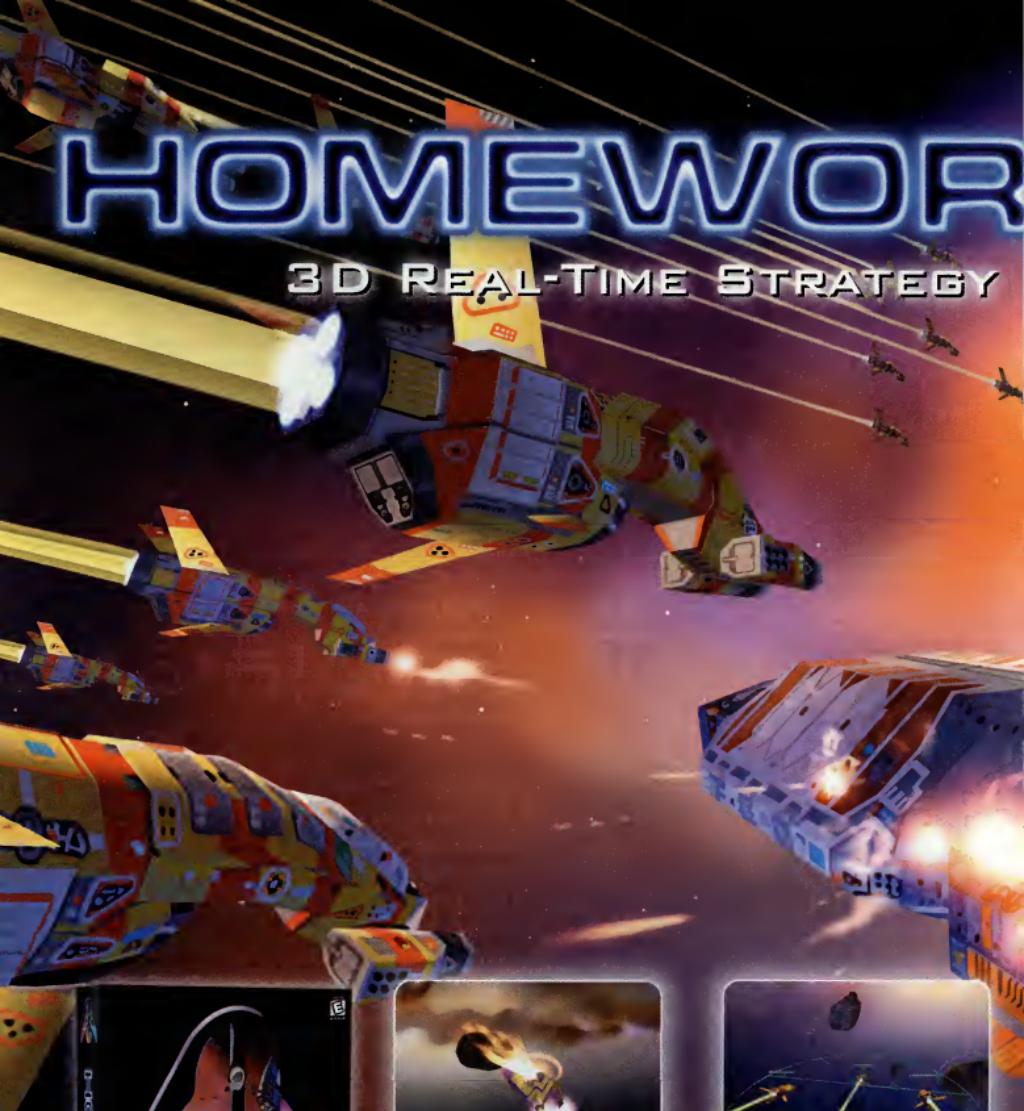
**SMOKE GRENADES** → It's what you'd expect — it gives off a cloud of smoke that lingers in the air for a while and obscures an area. The effect isn't that powerful though, so its use is limited.

**BINOCULARS** → Assigns to one of the two utility spots, is capable of a 4x and a 8x zoom. Really useful for recon.

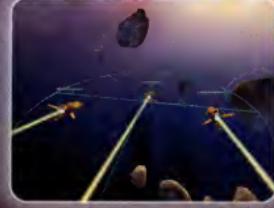


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Everyone



RUNNING CROUCH

## VETERANS

For all you R6 vets out there, listen up. Here's the skinny on what's changed in the engine and gameplay and how it will affect your tactics.

**MOVING WHILE CROUCHED** → Finally R6 training camp has included this important ability. Crouching will speed up how quickly your crosshair centers on an accurate shot. You can also run while crouched for a sort of ducking run effect.

**PEEKING** → This was supposed to eliminate the need to switch into third-person mode in order to look around corners. It works as intended, although the animation is pretty slow, which will result in your face getting blown off by vigilante terrorists or snipers. Use with caution.



**SNIPER RIFLE** → A helluva zoom — most rifles have two levels of zoom as well. The downside is they take forever to center. With autoaim on, forget about it. Be careful of the loud report on these, especially in single-player.

**GRENADES** → Always powerful, seems to be about the same area of effect as the improved grenades in *Eagle Watch*. Flashbangs are a bit more effective, as they leave a "stunbang" effect on your screen that can confuse you. Both grenades have a cool ringing effect in your ears.

## ► p. 23. WHAT'S THE STORY?

**T**he R6 storyline was excellent, based on the best-selling book by Tom Clancy (what an amazingly fortunate coincidence that the game came out the same time as the book!) and involved a seemingly unrelated group of terrorist activities leading up to a big-ass bombing at the 2000 Sydney Games. By comparison, the *Rogue Spear* storyline is pretty

blah — it starts out (again) with small-scale threats, before escalating towards yet another world-threatening situation, but the villains just aren't as interesting this time around. Though it twists and turns a little, the conclusion isn't that gripping, the final villains not terror-inducing.

The first half of the plot has you traipsing around some cool locations, like the Natural History Museum in NY (the first mission), a war-torn Kosovo city (straight out

of the last battle of *Saving Private Ryan*), a TV studio, and a 747 on the tarmac at Brussels airport (probably the game's highlight). In the last one, you have to sneak in the bottom of the plane while it's refueling, cap a bunch of terrorists, then sweep through the interior while using sniper support to take out the guy on the main exit. The second half of the game has you trudging around Russia, whacking bad guys in very James Bond/*Goldeneye* for N64-esque arctic evil terrorist bases.

With all the new content, it's a shame that the terrorist AI (definitely one of the main shortcomings of the original) wasn't improved much. Bad guys still walk their pattern or guard their specific area, with slight variations



A counterterrorist pauses to reflect on the futility of it all.



"Glock, glock" as Ed would say.



TOM, THAT'S BIZ...

...THAT'S ME



BACK AT THE CHALET

TRACY! HAVE YOU SEEN MY PANTS?

WHATTTT YOU WEARING YOUR PANTS BITCH!

COPYCAT BITCH

GLOCK GLOCK!

UH NO TIM

BITCH I BOUGHT THESE PANTS AT OLD NAVY BITCH

ON YOU BITCH RAT-A-TAT-TAT BITCH SIT!



DIE, JUST DIE!

HEY I KNOW LET'S HAVE

A PAR-O-W!



SNIPING FROM DISTANCE

in their starting locations when repeating a mission, and that's about it. The main improvement is in how the baddies react to grenades. Now, when you lob one in a room with terrorists, they will yell "Grenade!" or the equivalent and tear out of the room — I set up many an ambush that way. This tactic works a bit too well, though. On the Kosovo mission I threw a grenade by a doorway to draw out the couple of terrorists who I knew were inside, and managed to jack not just them, but another eight more terrorists who ran through an alley to see what all the commotion was about. Each successive terrorist was seemingly oblivious to the fact that he was running towards half a dozen of his dead buddies in a pile on the ground. Oh well.

Also, your squadmates still have an annoying tendency to block your path when you need to double back, particularly in doorways, often tempting me to just off them and be done with it. On the plus side, they did noticeably improve the hostage AI — they follow closely and get stuck less frequently. They will also react to tense shootouts at times by yelling "I can't take it!" and freaking out of the room, leaving you to go chase down their sorry ass. Considering the realistic nature of the game, and the attention to detail in many other areas of the game, the bad guy AI still leaves a lot to be desired.

► p. 28



Suddenly, Bob sensed that his identical twin had been shot.



This is what you'll be staring at for an extremely long time.



ROGUE SPEAR

SEE DICK GAME!

SEE DICK COMPETE!



DICK'S GOT JANE IN HEAT CIGL!

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DUCK AND COVER

## MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

With the single-player experience focusing on increased content rather than innovation, the multiplayer game makes you appreciate how much *Rogue Spear* can rock. And hey, that's how you'll be spending the majority of your time playing this game anyway, right? The tenseness of the firefights are still a total rush. Expect to experience that deer-in-the-headlights, slightly paranoid state that comes from playing too much Team Survival. Playing *Rogue Spear* multiplayer jacks up your awareness and adrenaline levels a notch or two. When you can get killed by a stray bullet or by a sniper you can't even see, it tends to make you a little more cautious, especially after you've sat out of multiple games because you got capped at the beginning.

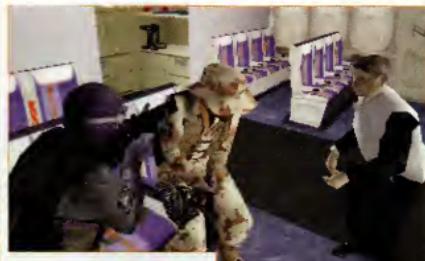
I like to say that *R6RS* is a great equalizer for FPS skill levels, because the best *Quake* player is not guaranteed to be the best (or even close to the best) at *Rogue Spear*. It gets back to this: *Rogue*



*Spear* is primarily a strategy game. Tactical elements — using the heartbeat sensor, anticipating your opponents' movements, using grenades as diversions, checking your six, knowing your teammates' locales, changing rates of fire, conserving ammo, knowing when to reload — these are all things that have little or nothing to do with playing a total action-rama like *Quake III*.

Okay, so the game modes are still adversarial and cooperative ... in co-op you can play through any of the single-player missions with up to seven other players, and if anything it's better this time around because of the added strategic possibilities of having snipers on your team. Using snipers effectively in single-player is sometimes more trouble than it's worth because of their unpredictability, but in multiplayer it comes together, because you can communicate more effectively and try to overlap fields of fire. On open, outdoor maps such as the first Siberian base, good snipers will be able to deal the damage. As before you can go in to multiplayer co-op missions with AI backup — essentially, multiple lives, that will give you a chance of success on the later tough missions.

The Adversarial multiplayer option features more than 12 different game modes, from Assassination (kill the NPC leader) to Double Bluff (get the hostages to your



base first) to Stronghold (first team to get someone in the enemy base wins), but the ones you will be playing are Survival and particularly, Team Survival. Simple, straight-up kill everyone on the other team — right here is where *R6* has single-handedly created a sub-genre of real-world team-based games. Essentially, Red Storm decided to leave a good thing alone, going with the "expansion pack" theory of more content to support an already popular game style.

So what we've got here is more of a sequel in the *Tomb Raider* sense of the word — not a lot of innovation, but plenty of new content. And although the game has its problems (some AI and graphics issues, lack of new features), the gameplay it provides is more compelling and involving than anything in its league. But, you're unlikely to get the same kind of buzz that the very first multiplayer game of *Rainbow Six* delivered. This game did what a lot of sequels do — rest on successful laurels and deliver a slightly enhanced version of the first game, instead of remembering that what made it great in the first place was its uniqueness. But by your fourth hour of Team Survival,

yelling at the top of your lungs, after wiping out the entire enemy team by yourself, you'll completely forget about feature limitations and be content exploring the detailed new maps. Hey, we can't wait for *PC Gamer* to get their copies of the game to let the carnage begin — yet again.

## GRAPHICS

Like the old *Rainbow Six* but slightly better. More polys and a few special effects here and there.

## SOUND

A class act like the first one, the many different gun sounds and bits of voice acting like "Tango Down!" combine into a cool atmosphere.

## DEPTH

Single-player will keep you interested, especially if you haven't played through the first game, and multiplayer doesn't have any problems, even if you'll be playing is Team Survival.

## DESIGN

A sequel in the *Tomb Raider*/expansion pack sense of the word.

## RATING

## Pluses

- Lots of new content
- More tactical options like snipers, etc.
- Slightly better graphics

## Minuses

- Single-player AI still weak
- Slower loading than the original
- A missed opportunity for real innovation in the genre

Get up! The pants of the free world hang in the balance.

Target sited 600 meters out  
wind - 5 knots  
out of the west  
2 rounds left in  
the MAGAZINE  
If the 1st one misses,  
the 2nd one WON'T

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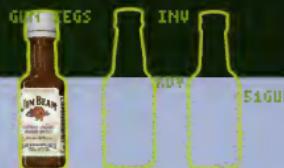
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# Flying High

Investigative Journalism  
At Its Finest



**N**orthwest pilots do it. John Denver may have done it. Crazy millionaires do it in balloons every year. No, we're not talking about crashing in the ocean (although it's a good guess). We're talking about flying the skies while three sheets to the wind. (We assume the millionaires are lit — they can't be that crazy, right?) But how does a regular Joe who (a) isn't rich, (b) isn't a licensed pilot, or (c) has no hope of convincing the guys from (a) and (b) to lend him a plane to recreate that same experience (without the hideously painful death part, of course)? Armed with the promise of free booze, we came up with a plan. The answer: Flight simulators and ... airline alcohol and lots of it. Thank God for expense accounts.

One problem — none of us know the first thing about flight sims ... or the second or third things. After all, these aren't real games. The only people who read 500-page books, memorize technical jargon, and sit through snooze-a-thon tutorials are engineering students. Who in their right mind enjoys keeping track of dials, switches, and air speed when you can't shoot at anything? Then hit us — we won't be in our right minds. This is our story — 5 journalists, 5 flight sims, and 55 tiny bottles of liquor (a.k.a. "mini's") on a collision course with destiny — all so you can learn from our mistakes.

## PCXL Roll Call

### Mike Salmon

DESCRIPTION → Stomach of steel, liver of steel

OFFICIAL DUTIES → Captain

FLIGHT EXPERIENCE → Slapped by a flight attendant for calling her a stewardess

HIGH ON → Power, nine bottles

of vodka, and a hit of absinthe

ROLE MODEL → Maverick from Top Gun, but we think Goose (the guy who died)

BEGINNING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .03

ENDING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .13

### Chuck Osborn

DESCRIPTION → Bottom of the totem pole

OFFICIAL DUTIES → Co-Pilot

POWERS → Body weight of Cuba, and the alcohol tolerance of a 12-year-old girl

FLIGHT EXPERIENCE → Listening and learning lyrics to "He's Pretty Fly For A White Guy"

HIGH ON → Anything handed to him by a stewardess

ROLE MODEL → Otis, the pitiful town drunk

BEGINNING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .05

ENDING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .18

### Mike "Scoops" Morrissey

DESCRIPTION → The new guy

OFFICIAL DUTIES → Co-Pilot

FLIGHT EXPERIENCE → Aspires to join the Microsoft Flight Simulator Mile High Club

HIGH ON → Life (cereal and the magazine), seven bottles of rum, and "Sheep Dip" (or maybe it was just the sheep)

ROLE MODEL → The Flying Nun

BEGINNING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .00

ENDING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .11

### Ed Lee

DESCRIPTION → Innocent but amused bystander?

OFFICIAL DUTIES → To laugh at rest of staff playing flight sims

POWERS → Ability to use words "pants" and "ass" in wild and wacky combinations

FLIGHT EXPERIENCE → Never met a flight sim he didn't loathe

ROLE MODEL → Erythromycin (for strep throat) — this new drug reacts violently with alcohol and crappy games

BEGINNING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .00

ENDING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .00

### Gia DeCarlo

DESCRIPTION → Delovely, delightful, and disguised with red hair

OFFICIAL DUTIES → Designated driver and flight attendant

POWERS → Pillow-fluffing, peanut-tossing, and mixing perfect Bloody Mary's

FLIGHT EXPERIENCE → Slapped Mike Salmon for calling her a stewardess. (That's "flight attendant," you stupid f—!)"

HIGH ON → French perfume, French wine, French fries, and French men

ROLE MODEL → Amelia Earhart (but we think it was Judy Landers from Stewardess School)

BEGINNING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → .00

ENDING BLOOD ALCOHOL

LEVEL → Boiling

(WARNING → PCXL doesn't condone irresponsible drinking and flying. Friends don't let friends pilot passenger jets while drunk, though we highly recommend kicking back a few afterwards.)

## FLY!

## Screaming Drunk over Bay Area

To see if flight sims can be enjoyed without the benefit of booze, we played the first game completely sober — mistake #1. Because this was a preview of the night ahead, we chose the beta version of GOD's Fly! to begin with, and picked the San Francisco Bay Area level, since it's our home, and, according to the menu screen, it's supposed to be "finished." (Menu screens are also lying bitches.)

**MIKE** → "Hey, my guns aren't working! What's going on?"

**CHUCK** → "There aren't any guns. You just fly around."

**MIKE** (in cold sweat) → "Noooooooooooooo!!!!"

The SF Bay Area is known for its beautiful rolling hills, historic buildings, and the Golden Gate Bridge — unless you're playing Fly!. The textures are flatter and blurrier than Kate Moss on a heroin binge and colored like something she puked up in rehab. After choosing the easiest possible setting and getting our Cessna 172R in the air, we tried to make the most of the situation with a fly-over of San Francisco. A lone tower, no bridge, and a strong desire for a shot of Jagermeister greeted us. "What the hell is that supposed to be?" became our mantra.

## SIM!!!

You can make any game more exciting if you use an exclamation point. Try it for yourself! (Sgt.)

**Walk!** — Maneuver a power-walking granny around a mall as she barrels over anyone who gets in her way. Extra points given for slapping other mall-walkers too slow to jump out of the way of your hopping app-inclages.

**Bus!** — A bus-riding sim in which there's only one seat left. And the bus just picked up two elderly women, a blind man, and a double amputee. Now get that seat!

**Windows!** — Just like regular Windows, but every time it crashes, the user gets an electrical shock. There's no game, but Bill Gates laughs and says, "Who's your daddy, bitch?" each time.

**Skydiv!** — Unfortunately, it's a real game. It also proves that an exclamation point in the wrong hands can be a very dangerous thing.

**Fly!!!** — Three times the fun of the original. And since  $3 \times 0 = 0$ , about the same amount of fun, too.

## How we tried to make Fly! fun

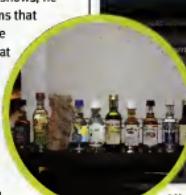
**MIKE** → Pretends he's in an air show and does loop-de-loop. Just like at real air shows, the plane stalls. Unlike real air shows, he regains control. Claims that his "joystick has gone flaccid" (whatever that means). Rest of staff tries not to think about it.

**CHUCK** → Gives up on flying and crashes over and over again to see if the explosions look good.

They don't, but use of Intensor force feedback chair gives new meaning to the self-pleasuring. "SCOOPS" → Warned off by Mike and Chuck's experiences, he uses Fly! CD for a game of Frisbee golf. Stops when it's pointed out to him that EA may steal the idea and release Frisbee Golf!

**ED** → Foregoes playing flight sims entirely and boots up Mech-Warrior 3. We can tell because he's the only one having any fun.

**GIA** → Gives staff a safety lecture



## All the vodka in the world won't get us to play Fly! again.

on how to escape from a bad game in the event of a crash, but manages to keep her hair-do intact. She returns to the "galley" to do nails and reapply make-up.

"It's time to start drinking after that shit!" says Mike. Truer words have never been spoken.

RATING → 

Soon after our night of debauchery, we received a reviewable version of Fly!. No, it doesn't look any better and yes, Mike's joystick is still flaccid (whatever that means).

## JOIN THE MILE HIGH CLUB

These are PCXL's steps for joining the Microsoft Flight Simulator Mile High Club. Good luck ...

- Find a willing partner (Note — if you sit at home playing flight sims, this may be more difficult than it sounds)
- Make comfortable ... err ... seating arrangements in front of your computer. Expect a bumpy flight.
- Create the airplane experience by sitting next to a noisy brat (optional only due to taste restrictions) and cover yourself with a blanket

- Choose highest difficulty level — the 747 — and take it at least a mile above the earth before beginning "aerial maneuvers" (i.e., flying loops).
- You must keep your aircraft aloft at all times and the altimeter cannot dip below 5,280 ft.
- After finishing the deed, you must land your craft (and the plane) before you roll over and fall asleep.
- Send a picture of your girlfriend and a screenshot of the exact moment you made the club to [theskyisthelimit@pcxl.com](mailto:theskyisthelimit@pcxl.com)

## COCK(PIT) TAILS

Next to "What the hell does that blinking light mean?" the most important question you should be asking yourself is "What should I drink?" Whether traditional or adventurous, first class or coach, take comfort in knowing that you won't pay \$4.50 per drink (correct change is appreciated) at home.

**BEER** → The old standby.

**PLUSES** → Readily available, cheap

**MINUSES** → When was the last time you saw a pilot ordering a Heineken at an airport bar?

**WELL DRINKS** → Traditional cocktail of alcohol and fruit juice

**PLUSES** → Authentic, potent

**MINUSES** → Hey, why is juice in my drink? This isn't a health farm!

**BLOODY MARY** → A flying favorite

**PLUSES** → You can drink this you can drink anything, celery stalk makes a nice snack

**MINUSES** → Turbulence might not make you barf, but this will

**MARTINI** → A yuppie favorite, elixir of vodka and vermouth

**PLUSES** → Pretend you're a secret agent while flying

**MINUSES** → You'll crash while trying to mix it

**ABSINTHE** → Thick, green hallucinogen with a bizarre minty smell

**PLUSES** → Even if the game sucks, you won't care

**MINUSES** → Flight sim/absinthe combo inspires you to jump off roof and cut off own ear

## HOW WE RATED

The number of drinks you'll need before a flight sim becomes enjoyable.

## SLIGHTLY BUZZED

A fun game; that you could probably enjoy without the booze

## FEELING NO PAIN

Needs a little liquid refreshment but still gets off the ground

## WORBLY

The screen probably looks a little blurry, but, damn, those clouds are purty

## TURBULENT

The pink elephants that you see, have a better flight model than you

## CRASH AND BURN

Drinking yourself into a catatonic state might help ... but we'd be lying

## F22 Lightning

The alcohol flows freely and our spirits gradually lift after "The Fly Incident." Sensing a need for mass destruction, we install *F22 Lightning*. "Is it a bad sign that it makes you install DirectX 3.0?" asks Mike. To get through it, it was going to take guts. But more importantly, it was going to take a lot of rum.

### The Tutorial

With Ed out of the picture, there were only three surviving editors. To practice our alleged skills, we explore the tutorials.

**"SCOOPS" →** Selects the beginner training mission and becomes saddled with the nickname, "Flying Weinierboy." Never realized that piloting an F22 could bore the piss out of you.

**MIKE →** Selects a slightly more advanced mission, but unable to get very far. Voodoo 3 makes game stutter more than a Boy Scout buying pomo.

**CHUCK →** Goes directly to Nuke mission after logging zero hours in training. Becomes frustrated when he finds that he's unable to fire his nuke. Goes back to tried and true method of crashing plane to see it blow up. Explosion graphics are still lame, but combo of liquor and

Intensor chair makes him giggle uncontrollably.

Compared to *Fly*, the graphics in *F22 Lightning* are revo-



*Apache Havoc* needs to be a little lighter on the "Apache" and a lot heavier on the "Havoc." Damn, that's a big cockpit!

## Apache Havoc

For a change of pace, the group settled on the helicopter sim, *Apache Havoc*. "I'm having more fun with the install screen than playing *Fly* and *F22 Lightning* combined. Look, there are explosions on the screen!" exclaimed Mike. The rest of us rushed to get a look, and sure enough, he was right. This was what we were wait-

ing for. This could be the one to turn it all around.

Out of the three of us, Mike was

the only one to get the game working on his computer. Chuck and "Scoops" used the opportunity to raid the liquor while leaving Mike to figure out how to fly what some call the most difficult-to-master aircraft in the world. After a few tense moments learning the control keys ("A...A...Q...Q... No, don't do that!"), he got the hang of it in about two minutes. So well, in fact, that Mike left the office to smoke a cigarette

and his helicopter was still in the air when he returned.

**MIKE →** "Could they make the cockpit any larger?" (This was a sarcastic remark referring to the massive instrument display clogging the screen.)

**CHUCK AND "SCOOPS" →** "That's what she said!" (in unison)

Without anybody to face in multiplayer, Mike shot at the ground several times (for, he claims, giving him a dirty look) and eventually left the helicopter on autopilot while Gia served more drinks. Unable to find any enemies to blow apart, Mike went down in a polygonal blaze of glory as his blood alcohol rose to new heights.

**MIKE →** "This is like *Blue Thunder*. Except without stuff to see people naked or Roy Scheider."

**RATING →**



Mr. Breathalyzer says,  
"Chuck be mighty f—ked up."

## LICENSE REVOKED

The following is an absolutely true transcript of a multiplayer game held between a drunken PCXL editor and players on an *F22 Lightning* server.

(\*or the best we could remember)

**PCXL-Chuck** (a pseudonym): Where is everybody? Come here so I can shoot ya. Auger: Welcome to our game, PCXL-Chuck. We look forward to a hearty exchange of gunfire. Good—good—good...injin.

**PCXL-Chuck** (a pseudonym): Auger: Perhaps you didn't read the Nova-World Rules of Conduct agreement. That type of language is uncalled for.

**PCXL-Chuck** (a pseudonym): Auger: No! When once these little triangles is u for me to shoot at?

**PCXL-Chuck** (a pseudonym): Auger: Oh, dear. That won't do. (Disables PCXL-Chuck's plane)

**PCXL-Chuck** (a pseudonym): Auger: Look at me... I'm JF4! JF4! What's this? (crashes plane and accidentally hits reboot button)



The PCXL crew tries to capture *F22 Lightning* in a bottle — after sucking the alcohol out of it first. It's a toss-up as to which sucked more — *F22* or the editors.



# Falcon 4.0

According to our trusty PAL (Personal Alcohol Level) detector, we're all officially plastered. What better way to test our hypothesis that even the most mind-numbing of games are better with alcohol than play a flight sim with the largest instruction manual we could find? *Falcon 4.0*, with a manual that looks thicker than our biceps and actually mentions the phrase "egressing the target," fit the bill.

**"SCOOPS" →** I don't even know what's going on in my plane. There's a lot of weird noises."

**CHUCK →** "It sounds like your plane's farting."

**MIKE →** "Sorry, that was me."

Surprisingly easy to install and jump into (for three guys in the midst of a personal meltdown), it was also the only game we could get to work in multiplayer. And best of all, it had guns and missiles! Ready to deathmatch, we took to the skies with all the grace of newborn calves.



We guess this sorta looks like *Drakan* — at least to a drunk.



It is quite possible that this screenshot from *Falcon 4.0* illustrates what "Goat Rope" is. The only thing it definitely illustrates is that we were totally smashed by the time we got to this game.

## The Results

**"SCOOPS" →** Crashes often, only to hear computer say, "That was a real goat rope." Wonders if flying goats are a playable feature.

**MIKE →** Watches as Chuck's plane veers in front and shoots it down. Repeats five times.

**CHUCK →** Makes "vroom, vroom" noises as he pulls back and forth on his throttle and babbles about the "stewardesses' breasts.

**Winner:** Mike

**Most Inebriated:** Chuck

**MIKE →** "Way too hard."

**"SCOOPS" →** If I had time to learn it, this might be fun."

**CHUCK →** (drools on self)

**RATING →**

## Endgame

Gia gives Mike and "Scoops" a safe ride home. Unable to pry himself away, Chuck fires up *Drakan* and plays for an hour before realizing he's not playing *Falcon 4.0*.

The rest of Chuck's evening is shrouded in mystery. Rumor has it he was found unconscious in "The Tenderloin" district at 4:00 AM with a crackwhore. He flatly denies all charges.

## What We Learned

**"SCOOPS" →** "What the hell is a goat rope?"

**MIKE →** Slim games are boring and slow as hell. Give me a game of *Quake II* any day.

**CHUCK →** If she walks like a man, talks like a man, and has an Adam's apple like a man, she's really a man. Yikes!

# Flying High

## CONTROLLERS

### IMERON IGS 350 INTENSOR LX

**PRICE →** \$199 (includes \$20 shipping)  
What's not to like about something that creates tingly sensations in your crotch? It's not always clear if those prickly feelings are from heavy vibrations or a lack of padding, but the Intensor game chair does a pretty good job of boomming your backsides (in a wholesome way, of course) with pounding bass. Its five speakers envelop you in sound, gently massaging your back when you're flying multi-player space invaders like *Quake III* or *Star Wars* flight sims, but don't buy it for comfort or constant use — it's not exactly rump-friendly. Laughably, an offer for a "free" extra cushion (\$2.50 shipping and handling) is included in the box... as if there wasn't plenty of room for the cushion in the first place. Multi-system compatibility (PC, TV, stereo, DVD, console systems) is a plus, but popping sounds from the plastic casing doesn't raise confidence in the Intensor's long-term reliability. However, we could just be a bunch of fatasses.

**RATING →** 6



### INTERACT CYCLONE 3D

**PRICE →** \$199.99 — \$29.99  
Yea, it's a Cyclone 3D — it's full of hot air and really blows. There are some good ideas here, namely allowing keytriggers to be programmed directly to the joystick by using a keyboard pass-through (there's a total of five, count 'em, five freakin' plugs!), 17 programmable buttons, and an ambidextrous layout for righties and lefties. But it looks and feels cheap, creaks loudly as you move the stick, spongy buttons, and has the sluggish, loose control of a narcoleptic turkey. If you see this Cyclone coming, take our advice and run for cover.

**RATING →** 3

### PERFORMANCE RAIDER PRO

**PRICE →** \$99.99  
As an economy stick, the Raider Pro is a mixed bag. It's pretty cheap as joysticks go, has an auto-fire feature, and even has suction cups on the base, but this just isn't a joystick we can recommend. The analog control is too loose and not very smooth, and it's infuriating enough to make you fling the stick across the room just to see how well it might fly. Oddly, button #8 is not the trigger — that would be the thumb button on top. Why, we can only wonder — but it really makes the stick less intuitive. While the button clicks are crisp, they're also hell-a-long in that "Hey, I'm playing with a cheap peripheral" style. Throw in a stiff, barely moveable base-mounted throttle and you won't want to use it even if someone paid you \$59.99.

**RATING →** 3



### THRUSTMASTER REFLEX 3D USB

**PRICE →** \$39.95  
Thrustmaster's answer to the Microsoft Sidewinder, the Reflex 3D is a better alternative to the Interact Cyclone 3D or the Performance Raider Pro, though obviously at a higher price. There are eight programmable buttons, a hat switch, a throttle, a twist action rudder control, and a base hefty enough to ensure it won't slide across the table. And, the stick is comfortable and responsive enough for long playing sessions. The hat switch is bit loose, though, giving the hat an overall slackness that can interfere with gameplay. Otherwise, the Reflex 3D is acceptable for people with USB and a moderate budget.

**RATING →** 6

### SUNCOM SFS FLIGHT CONTROLLER

**PRICE →** \$34.99  
For that real flying feel, it's hard to imagine a better stick than this one. Based on the F-15E Strike Eagle flight stick, the SFS conveys the bulky feel of a professional stick, yet remains comfortable for long-term use. But what's good for flight fanatics isn't necessarily good for the casual gamer. The SFS includes only four buttons, no throttle, or rudder, and doesn't attach to your desk. But the four-way hat switch is comfortable and all the buttons are easily reached and responsive. Designed to take real high-altitude punishment and reliable, it's available in both USB and joystick port versions, the SFS may not be the most stylish stick (read: Blocky) but it's good.

**RATING →** 8



### SUNCOM SFS THROTTLE

**PRICE →** \$89  
The only reason you'd want this is if you live and breathe flight sims. Meant for use with sticks like the Suncom SFS Flight Controller, the SFS Throttle is well-built and makes you look cool even when your plane is spinning out of control. The 16 programmable buttons, multiple hat switches, and overall layout replicates fighter jet controls, so it's easy to convert if you do have your pitch and roll stick. This big daddy has a hat switch and a smooth throttle motion to satisfy any potential supervillain who dreams of destroying the planet with one fatal pull.

**RATING →** 8



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# system shock 2

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Go to <http://pcx1.lgn.com/gaming411>: Product Number 90



## PART 2

## IN ID WE TRUST

BY ROB "TEX" SMITH

## WELCOME TO FANBOY CENTRAL



(Top) DiehardD gives 1134-Bane a taste of the lightning gun during the tense tourney final. (Mid) The server box housed all the cable, and the network team staved off three hacking attempts.

**M**esquite, Texas, isn't going to show up on many people's lists of ideal vacation destinations. But this eastern Dallas suburb (pop. 111,580) is of interest to the computer gaming community, purely for being the home of the legendary Id Software. And for three days at the beginning of August, over a thousand people descended on its hotels and fast food joints, a good many of them carrying PCs, monitors, keyboards, and cables unplugged from bedrooms around the country.

QuakeCon '99 was the fourth staging of this large-scale Id-sponsored BYOC (Bring Your Own Computer) LAN party. It involved 512 tournament participants fighting eight-player matches on

*Q3Test2* with the top four progressing to round two, where the format was repeated. The top four from the second round then went on to the final 128-player, 1-v-1 elimination section, fought on the specially-created *Q3Tourney* map ... until there was one.

Outside the tournament, 500 other eager players enjoyed fantastically smooth playing conditions (averaging less than 10 ping) over the massive network, constructed with enough power to run the New York Stock Exchange. This hardcore testing gave Carmack and crew the opportunity to see how their latest creation stood up under the most grueling of conditions.

With a few server tweaks, one system was configured to allow up to the maximum 128 players into a *Q3Test2* game. It seems 127 managed to get in, and though framerates bombed to between 2 and 7 fps, the spectacle of telefrags by the thousand was a sight to behold. It summed up the entertainment value of getting together with hundreds of other *Quake*-heads, and while the victorious DiehardD took the tournament plaudits, it was a success for all who attended.

But one word of warning: Subjecting yourself to three solid days in a room with 1000 *Quake* fans in the middle of a "dry" area of Texas (no beer at the stores and only a few hours service in hotels) is something not to be taken lightly. Be afraid.

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**H**ow weird is it to hear comments and questions like "kaos get your butt up here, now," or "Damn, man, Bane just beat the crap out of me," or how about "Frydaddy sucks?" You know what? Nobody bats an eyelid. This is online community speak, where George Myshlyayev, the eventual winner of the tournament, is known by the more manageable **DileharD**. For hardcore members of the online *Quake* community, it's a chance to put a real face to a faux name, though that does have its downsides. It's kind of embarrassing to discover that **Ky-Gloucester**, who's been bitch slapping you all over the Internet, doesn't look like he could beat his way out of a paper bag. (He was, however, a really nice kid.)

But that's the beauty of the LAN party — the significance of QuakeCon is purely the sheer scale of the event. But the size of this year's *Quake* festival is testimony to the perpetually endearing position that the game, (or perhaps more importantly, the company) has among the hardcore fan base. It's also evidently going only one way, and that's up. It's the Star Wars convention of the gaming industry, where the hardest of the hardcore gather to show exactly how dedicated, almost cult-like, the fans of this game are. With tentative plans for QuakeCon 2000 already under consideration, the event's success is measured by the success of the game, and given the level of organization and sponsorship dollars doled out by Id for this event, expectations are running high.

## STAT TRACKING

**S**ince *Quake III Arena* represents the definitive death-matching experience, it's likely to head up computer gaming's continuing bid to be recognized as a genuine sport. The Total Entertainment Network has made major inroads in mainstream conscience through its successful series of Professional Gamers' League finals — everyone from the *New York Times* to *The Wall Street Journal* have reported on the final events. But while watching the San Francisco final round (each season is concluded in a different city) the PGL's commissioner, and founder of Atari, Nolan Bushnell discussed the possibility of the deathmatch becoming a spectator sport. The conclusion: It's still some way off (due in large part to the aforementioned appearance of the contestants — not exactly superstar material).

One of the most important reasons for this lack of enthusiasm was that viewing the action on the big screen only covered the movements of one of the two players. The cat-and-mouse

antics of 1-v-1 stand-offs are where the tactical elements shine, and where the skill of the two combatants becomes evident. This simply didn't come across by following one player. That issue is certainly one that still needs to be addressed, but if you're going to have your sport accepted by the American viewing audience, it needs to have stats. That's where Kansas City-based start-up NetGames USA comes in.

They convinced Id to include a log file as part of the server tracking function in *Quake III Arena*. This file contains every piece of information about each player's pick-ups, shots, hits, misses, frags, deaths, and suicides. It's then sent from the game server to the NetGames server, where the information is tallied and presented in baseball-like stat format. For QuakeCon, the result was that each player had a unique login to the server and his various successes and failures were recorded for posterity. It's through this piece of technical wizardry that anyone can see that **Toxic** scored the highest frag count (283), and **Tall One** has the



Only at a LAN party like this can the indescribable happen. Over 100 people joined the server and formed a triangle, before someone with a Quad rocket decided to make jam. Excellent.

shame of getting destroyed with 173 deaths in just three 15-minute matches (a record our own Dan Egger hasn't even accomplished).

Currently, only certain specially-configured *Quake II* servers utilize the NetGames software but the soon-to-be-released *Unreal Tournament* will ship with built-in support, while support for Dynamix' *Tribes* is due soon. If you're looking at hosting a tournament, it's a great way to get the most from the game — the bragging rights, the definitive answers to the question of blaster kills, suicides, etc. and as a server-side feature, doesn't require any user download whatsoever.

NetGames' software certainly helped this Q3A tournament run incredibly smoothly by organizing the brackets. If this technology is implemented by enough forthcoming games, it could be the most important catalyst yet to establishing computer gaming as a bona fide spectator event.

## BY THE NUMBERS

22673	Total frags at the tourney
1000	Number of registrants
450	Number of computers brought by fans
100	Number of computers brought by sponsors
15	Miles of cable linking the machines
125	Number of volunteer organizers
750	Number of network hubs
100	Number of pizzas delivered to the hotel
57	Percent of attendees who were male
0	Percent of attendees who got any action
104	Degree temperature outside the hall
55	Degree temperature inside with air conditioning
300,000	Dollar cost of hardware used to run the Con

Look for **Battlezone II** this fall. Screenshots courtesy of Pandemic Studios.



**the "kill-zone" as seen by a standard 300 dpi mouse.**



**the "kill-zone" as seen by the 1000 dpi razer boomslang.**



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## WE ARE THE MOD MAKERS



QuakeCon's Exec. Director is propped up by the Hooters girls.



Eight players stare intently at the pictures of the Hooters girls.

Ever a game needs the support of the mod-making community, it's Q3A. The reason is all too apparent: What you're getting out of the box is the straight-up deathmatch and a CTF game (written by Vancouver-based programmer Zoid). That's it. All that nonsense about other possible team-based game options, and variants on the deathmatch theme, have been nixed. Id's attitude: "We're creating the definitive deathmatch experience — end of story."

Post-release, it's unlikely that Id will supply much more in the way of actual game content (they'll be working on a single player game using the Q3A engine) although there's little doubt that the engine will be patched to address any bugs that slip through as deadline day approaches. But for gameplay variants you'll be looking online — and eager amateur programmers will be bashing out their mods with the intention of creating the next CTF or Team Fortress (and thus get hired or bought by one of the larger companies).

To Id's credit, they not only understand this situation, but have the foresight to embrace it. During Carmack's address to the QuakeCon attendees he confessed amazement at some of the features that mod makers managed to work into the Quake II engine. Certainly the engine has been written to make it easier to access the core elements, and to produce these add-ons. With that in mind, Id organized workshops for those interested in model, level, and mod making and had experts explain some of the nuances of the new system to them. 3D modeler Paul Steed (supplier of the voluptuous Hooters girls as eye candy for the masses) held a packed discussion on creating models for Q3A. The session was packed not for the Quake babes, but because of the fascination with his presentation, the highlight of which was his Carmack model leaping and swirling around, to illustrate the animation system!

Likewise, level designer Paul Jaquays instructed a horde of eager level creators on the fine points of working with the all-new curved surfaces which allow a new level of detail in the environments. Possibly the best example of the use of curved surfaces, and evidence of outside parties' grasp of the new system, was in the demo of Raven Software's *Trek Voyager: Elite Force* (detailed in last month's PCXL). Recreating the USS Voyager to match its on-screen appearance has been made easier for by the engine's curved surfaces. Now, with former Id employee American McGhee holed up in EA working with Rogue Entertainment on a Q3A-based game based on the frightening "Alice in Wonderland," there will be many more developers flexing their creative muscle with the new tools.

## WORST PICK-UP LINES

Get a bunch of bimbo-heads in a convention hall, throw in some women, and let the hilarity begin. (Note: These are all actual lines overheard at QuakeCon — you just can't make this shit up)

LINE #1 →

"We're here for a

computer games

convention"

SAID TO →

Hooter's waitress

WHY IT'S BAD →

It's the non-get-

ting laid Jedi

mind trick, "I am

not the man you are looking for"



LINE #2 → "These scars on your face ... are they from acne? I have those too!"

SAID TO → Some poor, defenseless

Hooter's waitress

WHY IT'S BAD → The coup de Gras of

bad pick-up lines, this guy, in one

sentence, manages to insult her and point

out his own flaws. Get back inside before

you hurt yourself"

LINE #3 → "Hey, can I show you the net-work hub?"

SAID TO → Random marketing hottie

WHY IT'S BAD → Women are never

impressed by technology or lewd tech-

nology immundities

LINE #4 → "Exactly how stupid do I look in this cowboy hat?"

SAID TO → Barmaid at the Rodeo

WHY IT'S BAD → It's bad enough you're

a British guy wearing a cowboy hat —

don't point it out to her"

LINE #5 → "Wow, a chick. Man, a chick at QuakeCon. That's cool!"

SAID TO → Some chick at QuakeCon

WHY IT'S BAD → We call women chicks

behind their backs only. To their face, a

term like "babe" is much better

## ABOVE THE LAW

**O**f course, creating mods and levels before the game is released is a practice frowned upon by Id. Despite their position as a development powerhouse, the company still needs to pay the bills (those Porsches and Ferraris don't come cheap, y'know). Let's face it, if amateur hackers managed to create new levels that would work with the current test, why would you bother to go out and buy the finished product?

It's easy to imagine Id laying their trade in an economic bubble away from the hustle and bustle of publishers' advances, deadlines (the infamous "when it's done" only lasts so long), and the bottom line. And while Id is certainly in a fairly unique position, CEO Todd Hollenshead explained to us that "just because we're Id doesn't mean that we don't feel economic pressure, although it is different for us than many, because we're completely internally funded."

While that's a stable and strong position, the publishers (in this case, Activision) pay only to secure the rights to the game, and no more until the gold master disc has shipped to the manufacturers. Through this process Hollenshead reckons that Id earns between 70-80% of the potential gross of the game through development, with Activision gaining around 20%, and the distributors, 10%. So, Id gets by far the largest slice of the pie without the aggravation and hassle involved in actually publishing a game (securing retailers, garnering media coverage, hype and general PR, etc.). This is quite different from most publisher/developer deals, which are more like 30% developer, 60% publisher — if the developer is lucky. However, publishers usually fund much of the development, something that Id takes care of by itself.

Within this financial framework, protection of their intellectual property rights is an important factor to Id. As evidenced by Carmack's address at QuakeCon, protecting the code from exploitation that can damage their retail sales is vital to the company. This is particularly interesting now, as rival developer Valve announced that mod makers for *Half-Life* could sell their creations and profit from them. These two diametrically opposed view-

points both have their merits and it will be interesting to see if any mod programming groups planning *Quake III*-based add-ons jump ship for the promise of earning the greenbacks by working with the *Half-Life* code.

Id's concern over protecting its potential sales is entirely understandable when Hollenshead guesstimates ("based on anecdotal evidence") that there's roughly a 50% piracy rate of their products. And with *Quake II* being pirated around the world, that estimate heads towards 80%. That's a staggering amount of cash being whipped from Id's pockets in warez-land. Germany is a particularly virulent market for pirates, since the game (due to its violent content) is not readily available — but with a rabid fan base, the country's stipulations drive gamers to piracy as the only means to get the game.

Hollenshead reluctantly admits that there's little specifically that the company can do to prevent piracy. Concepts such as requiring the CD remain in the drive to play the game have been scratched on the grounds that most gamers would rather throw in their favorite Nine Inch Nails, Metallica, Marilyn Manson, or Ricky Martin (why, oh why!) CD and frag to that. Currently, different technologies are being considered that prevent CD to CD copying, with the understanding that if any measure stamps out the estimated 80% of "casual" piracy, the remaining hardcore 20% isn't going to do the company irreparable damage.

Of course, all the PCXL readers who've read this far needn't worry about the pirating issue since you'll all be buying your own copy of the game as soon as it hits shelves. Isn't that right?

## NEXT MONTH

Find out what happens in the final stages of development. PCXL keeps its head low, popping up only for the juiciest tidbits of information on the final tally of levels, weapons, skins, models, and fine tuning, as *Quake III* enters the home straight.



Raven demonstrated some new levels for their Q3 game, *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*.

# SEE DICK PLAY!

# SEE DICK WIN!



## JANE LIKES DICK!

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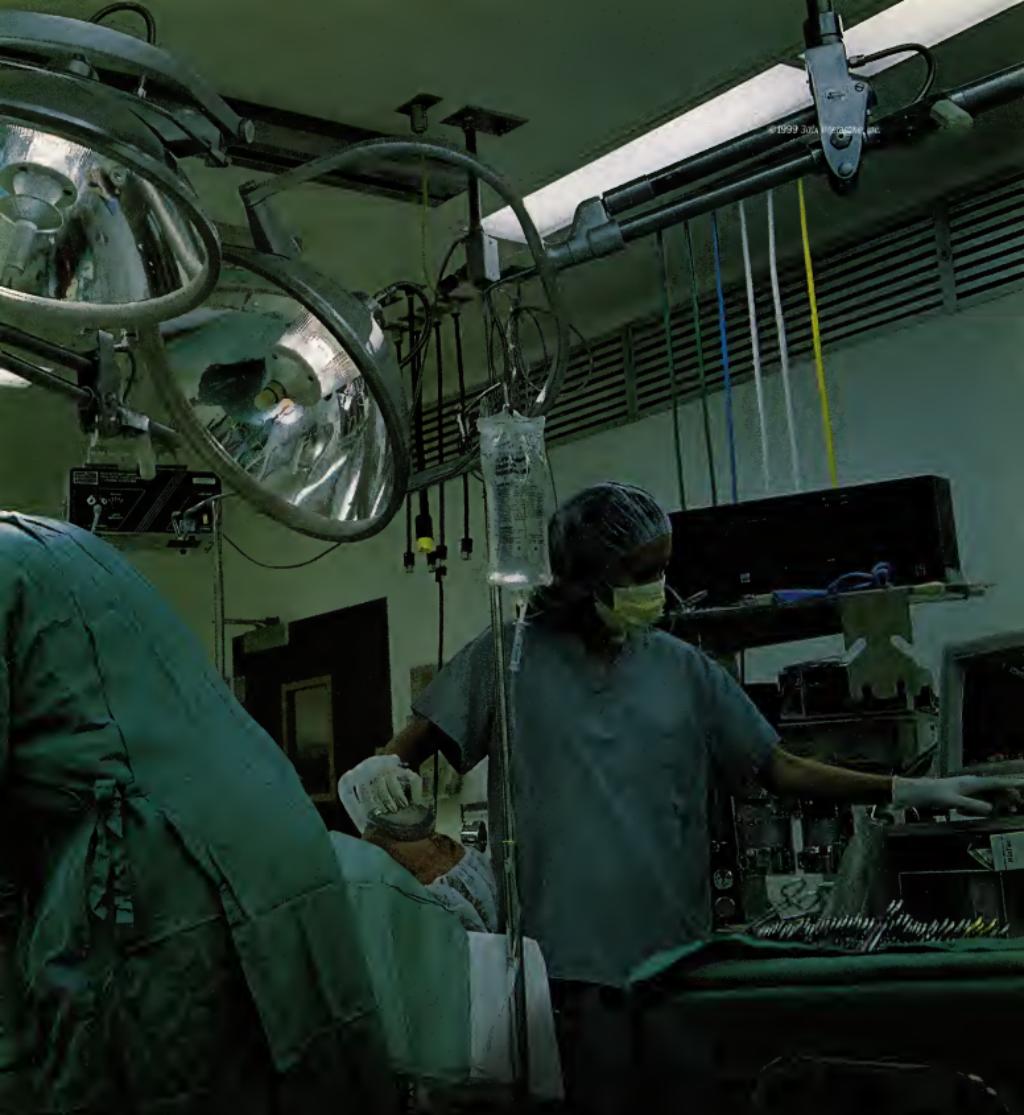
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would a leg blown off by, say, a plasma gun  
have a similar texture?



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looking at her like that.**



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## 3Dfx shows off Voodoo4

But are they giving Voodoo3 owners the shaft?

**J**ust a few short days before 3Dfx's release of the Voodoo3 3500 — the first Voodoo3 graphics accelerator more powerful than a Voodoo2/SLI combo — the company was already touting the virtues of its next generation graphics card to the gaming press. While console systems generally enjoy a shelf-life averaging three to four years (Atari and Sega are the exceptions), PC gamers have reluctantly gotten used to the idea that each generation of 3D card has about one year of life before something better comes along. At least, until now.

Although not officially named or announced, it's a safe bet that

3Dfx's next card will be called the Voodoo4. Based on the strength of the brand, 3Dfx acknowledged that the Voodoo name isn't one they'll be giving up anytime soon. (Just promise us there won't be a Voodool or Extreme Voodoo.)

But even without a formal announcement (though one should be made by the time you read this), 3Dfx was more than happy to show off the technology behind their upcoming 32-bit color board. Demonstrated via emulation on eight (yes, that's eight) Voodoo3 boards running in SLI mode, the new T-Buffer engine (the T comes from Vice President and Chief Technical Officer, Gary Tarolli) is a collection of hardware-

rendered cinematic effects designed to close the gap between movies and the PC. It's reasonable to expect that you'd have to wait until sometime next year to buy 3Dfx's successor to the Voodoo3. After all, the much-touted 3500 was just released, right? Well, you would also be dead wrong.

The Voodoo4 will be released Fall '99, just in time for Christmas. That gives brand new 3500 owners only three or four months to enjoy technology's cutting edge before the dark shadow of obsolescence overtakes them. While we won't debate 3Dfx's wisdom in releasing successive generations of technology so close together (we'll leave that to our First Person section on p. 132), we will put it into a more tangible perspective ...

Imagine for a moment that 3Dfx is ... oh, say ... the old TV series "Three's Company." The Voodoo3 board is Suzanne Sommers. (Just stay with us here, we'll make a point eventually.) After Suzanne was pushed off the show, Jennifer Harrison (or the Voodoo3) replaced her and was not much of an improvement. But less than a season later, Jennifer was sent packing by the prettier, sexier Priscilla Barnes (aka Voodoo4). Now, did we really give Jennifer a chance? Probably not — and that's exactly what gamers who recently paid \$250 for a new Voodoo3 will think when they find a prettier, sexier Voodoo4 on store shelves come fall.



Motion blurring makes a big difference in how this scene looks. Whether that's a cool effect or an annoying distraction from the action is still to be determined.



The picture on the left does not have anti-aliasing or depth of field enabled, while the picture on the right does. Notice how the stairstepping on the wall disappears and your attention is diverted to the background in the second picture.

### NEW STUFF

**REALTIME FULL-SCENE SPATIAL ANTI-ALIASING**  
In all previous hardware accelerators, anti-aliasing (the smoothing of rough edges that causes "stairstepping" or "jaggies" in your game environments) is achieved using software drivers and hacks. Because of the high CPU overhead of running those extra programs, frametimes inevitably suffer to the point where anti-aliased games run like silent, lifeless shadows. With the T-Buffer engine, the process is transferred to the new hardware, keeping frametimes at an estimated 60fps. But what really gave us a collective shifty is that this new feature will be fully backslash-compatible with all Glide, Direct3D, and OpenGL accelerated games on the market. So, that old copy of *Jagged Lines* 2 may not look like a whole new game, but it will look substantially better.

#### MOTION BLUR

If you could pick one new feature designed for rampant overuse — like the omnipresent lens flare in space combat games — it would have to be temporal anti-aliasing, otherwise known as motion blur. The T-Buffer creates the illusion of fluid movement by generating a series of blurred after-images that follow an object as it moves across the screen. While this is a cool effect when manually exaggerated to make the display stand out, the effect can also be used subtly to produce natural movements. Then again, as we recall how subtlety often takes a backseat to gloss in the games biz, to paraphrase Han Solo, we "have a bad feeling about this."

#### DEPTH OF FIELD

Movies create a depth of field by blurring everything but the focal point of the camera. For example, an object in the foreground may be in sharp focus, but when the action suddenly switches to the background, that object will blur as our attention shifts to the new focal point. Most games, however, don't give visual cues like this to draw a player's attention from one section of the screen to another. This new feature will allow gamers to control the focal point of the director, shifting the player's visual focus in real-time. Initially, our reaction is that Depth of Field will be used mostly in cutscenes or adventure games rather than fast-paced first-person shooters, but only time (and designer's imaginations) will tell.

#### SOFT SHADOWS/REFLECTIVE BLUR

If you've ever noticed that most shadows and reflections in games are unrealistically sharp-edged, then you'll appreciate what the T-Buffer does to them. For example, for those who have one, shadows aren't black blocky copies of an image, but softened, stretched out images. Likewise, reflections aren't sharp reproductions, but increasingly blurred the farther an object is away from a reflective surface. This feature allows these same photo-realistic details to be used in games, making your gaming experience more cinematic and "real."

# GET IN CONTROL

With a slew of PC games making a gamepad more appealing (especially in the sports arena) we grabbed a few current options, along with an upgraded Saitek joystick, and ran them through the PCXL ringer.

## CH Products USB Gamepad

PRICE → \$30  
WEBSITE → [www.chproducts.com](http://www.chproducts.com)  
BUNDLE → None



The Microsoft Sidewinder series has become the Elvis Presley of game peripherals — often imitated, but few come close to matching the original, thrust for pelvic thrust. Take CH Products own version of the Sidewinder Gamepad, a Batarang-shaped USB option sold in black or transparent versions. Cased in smooth, unyielding plastic that feels like it's made to withstand bullets, the

gamepad's pseudo-ergonomic design is still nowhere near as comfortable or as intuitive as the good ol' Sidewinder.

While the button layout has changed (four on the front and four on top) and the control is okay, the CH gamepad doesn't bring anything new to the table, not even a somewhat lower price (the Sidewinder also retails around \$30). So why bother? Stick with the Sidewinder.

### RATING



#### Pluses

- Clear casing is cool ... if you're 12

#### Minuses

- Casing is too smooth, too hard
- Like a bad "covers" band ...
- Familiar, but unsatisfying

## Logitech Wingman Gamepad Extreme

PRICE → \$39  
WEBSITE → [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)  
BUNDLE → Star Wars: Rogue Squadron Elite Missions (three levels)



By far the most overused word of 1999, the "extreme" in the Wingman Gamepad Extreme refers to tilt-sensor technology. It makes you want to swing a Mountain Dew, doesn't it? Okay, not really, but while this added feature works fine, we just can't find anything that exciting (or extreme) about it.

As a test, we played a racing game by steering with the D-pad

and then by tilting the controller. Consistently, we got better scores by just using the D-pad — mainly because tilting gamepads have no fixed base, which encourages over-tilting. This gamepad is a pure Sidewinder clone except the buttons and D-pad are a little farther north, making it difficult to hit the top buttons. If you must have a tilt-sensor pad, this one works well. But otherwise, we recommend the un-extreme version.

### RATING



#### Pluses

- Comfortable
- Tilt sensor technology

#### Minuses

- Requires a steady hand
- Buttons and pad spaced too far up

## Saitek

### Cyborg 3D USB

PRICE → \$74.95 (\$69.95 for non-USB)  
WEBSITE → [www.saitek.com](http://www.saitek.com)  
BUNDLE → None



In our review of the Cyborg 2000 (July '99), we knocked it for only having a paltry four buttons, even though the stick itself rated well. Heading our call, Saitek sent us their new Cyborg 3D, a USB stick virtually identical to the 2000 except with four additional buttons

on the front of the base and a rotating handle. The Cyborg series is customizable, allowing you to swivel the head, adjust the palm rest, and even switch the side of the throttle handle. Combine that with a cool look, good handling, and the four additional buttons and you have one terrific stick. Our beef? At \$74.95, the Cyborg 3D is over \$40 more expensive than the 2000. Nice try, but do extra buttons really cost \$10 each?

### RATING



#### Pluses

- Southpaw friendly
- Twist handle and extra buttons
- Customizable

#### Minuses

- Pricey
- Twice the cost of the Cyborg 2000

## Saitek

### Pi20 Action Pad

PRICE → \$9.99  
WEBSITE → [www.saitek.com](http://www.saitek.com)  
BUNDLE → None



The Pi20 Action pad is an innocuous little pad with a gimmick — it has a removable joystick handle. Obviously designed for gamers who do a lot of thumb-wrestling with their pads, the Pi20 can be used as a standard gamepad or, by fitting the handle into the D-pad, used as an "action" pad for furious digit-abusing like you'd experience playing a fighting game. That's all

well and good, until you consider that there just aren't that many fighting games for the PC, and even fewer worth buying.

While the little joystick doohickey looks kinda cool, the Pi20 is just an ordinary, yet very inexpensive, six-button gamepad shaped like a Stealth Fighter. For the die-hard fighting game aficionado, or the budget-minded gamer (read: Cheap and/or unemployed), this one's okay.

### RATING



#### Pluses

- Has a removable joystick
- Handle locks into pad when not in use

#### Minuses

- Back buttons feel cheap
- Do you need a removable joystick?

## 3dfx Voodoo 3

### 3500 TV AGP 16MB



PRICE → \$249.99

WEBSITE → [www.3dfx.com](http://www.3dfx.com)

BUNDLE → Full version of Unreal,

VideoStudio, WinOVO

QUAKE II → 82.3fps (800x600)

62.7fps (800x768)

3DMARK → 3132

Honestly, this was the one we were waiting for. After teasing us with the Voodoo3 2000 and 3000, the latest in high-end 3dfx cards is finally here. Worth the wait? Yes and no. Yes, because the card certainly flies, is feature-packed and possibly the best performing accelerator currently on the market, and NO, because the Voodoo4 is just around the corner.

The 16MB version of the 3500 we tested posted the usual impressive results when running Glide games like *Quake II*. Indeed, it eclipsed all the other cards we ran through our test system in the 3Dmark-assessment of D3D performance (including the high-end TNT2 with 32-bit color support), making this the current card of choice for most power users.

Running at 183MHz and processing 366 MegaTexels per second,

the 3500 packs some serious heat — and we don't just mean in poly-pushing power. After just 20 minutes the chip was like a hot plate. Though it is possible to overclock the speed (to around 212MHz), it voids the warranty, spawns a system warning about the dangers, and could melt the chip if you cook it without the most powerful fan you can find.

Installation of the 3500 is a little more complex than single cards, due to the TV output IO controller connector. This thick, blue, bubble-ended cord allows you to hook up your cable TV and speakers to allow very clear TV pictures through your monitor. The simple software package that powers it allows you to set the card to send the TV signal to a TV screen rather than the monitor, and also offers a familiar remote control software pack to make the usual volume and channel changes. Setting

up this part of the card can be daunting, and there's virtually nothing in the way of printed documentation. While the HTML-based instructions are reasonably complete, and explain all the features, including setting the radio tuner, there should have been printed docs to cover the basics.

Then again, this is a card that's going to appeal to high-end gamers. If you're 3D card-less and are craving the best that 3dfx currently offers, this is certainly it. But if you're already running a Voodoo2 or TNT card, stick with it until the next real generation arrives later this fall.

#### RATING 8

##### + Pluses

- Blazing Glide speed
- TV Out support

##### - Minuses

- Expensive
- Short shelf life

## Microsoft SideWinder

### Dual Strike USB Controller

PRICE → \$49.95

WEBSITE → [www.microsoft.com/hardware](http://www.microsoft.com/hardware)

BUNDLE → None



Those software-emulator dealers are already out there aiming to turn your PC into a \$2000 PlayStation, so why not have a controller to complete the transmogrification? Indeed, the Dual Strike Controller looks like some bad-ass, monsterized Dark-Side version of a PSX controller with some major pituitary difficulties. Then you pick it up, and — AUUUGH! It's broken! Or did it move by itself? Oh, wait ... It's "supposed" to move like that!

The right-hand grip is ball-socket mount, allowing for movement on two axis. It feels weird, and it's intended primarily for first-person shooters of the *Quake/Half-Life* ilk.

Included with the software is a 75-second AVI of a *Half-Life* session, with an active overlay illustrating sample function setups for the Dual Strike's seven buttons, two triggers, free-motion arm, and rocker pad. A note of caution: While the rocker pad facilitates special motion such as strafing (it's a breeze with the Dual Strike), beware the "lazy thumb" syndrome, wherein the natural grip of your hand may drag the rocker pad slightly to the left. The pad is sensitive, and if you tend to

spread your hands a little, you may find your onscreen persona sideslipping and that's bad news.

Between its organic lines and the fact that you can play PC games while leaning back in your chair, the Dual Strike is one of the most comfortable controllers we've used. So comfortable that it's easy to forget that first-person shooters are not meant to played in a laid back, casual state. Laid back, casual warriors die.

#### RATING 8

##### + Pluses

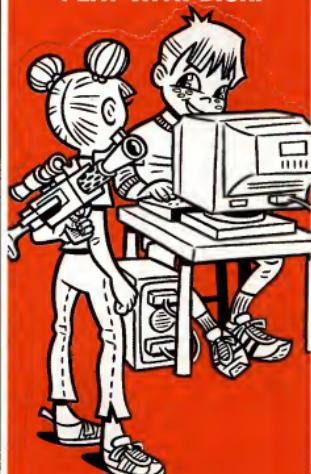
- Wraparound forefinger triggers
- Left-side analog rocker pad

##### - Minuses

- Non-ambidextrous
- Left side X/Y buttons a little too close together

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**SEE JANE  
PLAY WITH DICK!**



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# THE GREAT 3D CARD HEADACHE

## Where do you go now?

Three Voodoo3 options, several TNT2 variants, a highly-touted Matrox possibility, and the lingering potential of Savage4 — what's a gamer to do? How do you decide what's your best video card option? Listen to the PCXL experts, of course.

**A**pologies in advance for throwing you a math equation here. We certainly don't mean to create any cerebral challenge, but with the latest range of video cards all offering excellent features, effects and performance, the decision on what should power your games collection has become increasingly confusing. In the spirit of throwing a veil of darkness on an already cloudy topic, you need to consider three factors:

**X** = CARD YOU CURRENTLY HAVE IN YOUR SYSTEM  
**Y** = BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR VIDEO CARD  
**Z** = GAME-TYPES YOU PLAY

(X / Y) \* Z



**THE REASONING** → Of course, the card you currently have is the primary factor on whether you should be shopping for new hardware. That's to be balanced against the types of games you play and can be categorized in broad terms. If *Quake* engine-based games (or any primarily supporting OpenGL) are among your favorites, then Voodoo is going to be your card of choice. For Direct3D games, a Matrox G400 Max is probably the best bet, but you'll suffer lackluster OpenGL performance. For the well-rounded gamer, experiencing all types, shapes, and formats of games, the TNT2 is the PCXL pick.

### The Results

Naturally, this is gibberish (not unusual for PCXL), since TNT2 doesn't divide by \$100, for example. But you get the drift, right? So, using the PCXL Geometric Algorithm Calculator, we elicited the following scientifically-proven facts. Now you can buy the best card for your buck, safe in the knowledge that you're backed by a highly-scientific approach. Mix and match your options, budget, and game preferences along these lines and you can't go wrong.

**CARD** → None

**BUDGET** → Less than \$100

**OPTIONS** → Using your existing 2D card, adding a Voodoo2 for around \$80 or less is a valid budget option. Importantly, should you decide to upgrade at a later stage to a TNT1, the Voodoo2 will still be useful for the OpenGL/Glide-based games. In fact, the TNT1 is another option, since even the 16MB AGP version can be found for under \$100.

**CARD** → 2D+Voodoo2/TNT1

**BUDGET** → \$150

**OPTIONS** → By the time you read this, a 32MB AGP TNT2 is likely to be in this budget range (if you shop around). The greatest benefit over your existing setup is 32-bit color support (for the likes of *Quake III* and others on the horizon). It's the natural successor for TNT1 owners, but if you're a big fan of *Quake II* (and related games), the Voodoo3 power is still likely to score you better framers.

Another option is the Voodoo3 3000 which, at press time, is available for around \$180, with a \$30 rebate on offer from the fine folks at 3Dfx (likely an incentive to clear inventory before they make the cards obsolete with the holiday release of the Voodoo4). This board sparkled in our testing conditions, not surprisingly posting the best *Quake II* scores, and also exceeding some basic TNT2 options (though not the higher RAM speed Ultras) in our brutal Direct3D tests.

**CARD** → Voodoo3/TNT2

**BUDGET** → \$200

**OPTIONS** → With either of these two cards powering your system you're certainly sitting pretty for the time being. The Voodoo3's well-documented 16-bit color restriction is the primary reason for steering clear at the moment (and also the looming fourth generation coming soon), but that's balanced against its superior OpenGL performance over the solid, reliable TNT2. What's not been mentioned thus far is the excellent Matrox



G400 Max. Sporting the best image quality of all the cards we tested, it also posted the best Direct3D performance, then tripped at the final hurdle with chronically disappointing OpenGL support.

At around \$180, this card is still an excellent investment — especially if some of the games on your "plan to buy" list include those that support some of its funky features such as the environment bump mapping. Another factor to consider is whether TV Out support or Dual Head (for two monitors) gets you excited.



**CARD** → Any

**BUDGET** → Money no object

**OPTIONS** → How about this — get a Matrox G400 Max complete with its dual-head option (so you can connect it to two monitors), 32MB 4X AGP support, and potential eye candy of the bump mapping (it makes water effects ripple superbly, among other things). Now, give your games the OpenGL boost they need with the Quantum Obsidian X24 (dual Voodoo2 SLI configuration on one board). At \$180 for the G400 Max and a whopping \$350 for the Quantum3D, this setup proves that you're really serious about your gaming needs.

A more moderate option is the newly-released Voodoo3 3500 TV. At \$250, its OpenGL performance matches the Voodoo2 SLI configuration and it also boasts decent Direct3D support. Alternatively, a

high-end TNT2 Ultra such as the Hercules Dynamite (also \$250) will give you the 32-bit color support the Voodoo3 can't.



### Take yer pick

It's a jungle out there right now. We didn't even touch on the Guillemot Xentor 16MB TNT2, which is likely to be just under \$100 by the time you read this. And we completely ignored the Savage4 cards, since the only game of note to support its excellent S3TC technology is the yet-to-be-released *Unreal Tournament*. Even the budget price can't get us to recommend that one.

But carefully assess your options following these guidelines and we can guarantee that you're not going to go too far wrong in the graphical quality gleaming from your monitor. The basic fact of the matter is that you really can't go wrong with any of the aforementioned chipsets.

The TNT2, G400, and Voodoo3 all deliver great performance at reasonable prices. However with the Voodoo4 and TNT3 coming out this Christmas, it may make more sense to wait. If you have at least a Voodoo2 in your system, then there is really no need to pick up a Voodoo3 or TNT2, just hold out until December and get the best of the new (read about Voodoo4 on page 47 and hear about TNT3 next PCXL).

We apologize for the confusion and wish we could give you a definitive winner, but as the marketplace gets more crowded with quality chipsets, the decision on what to buy is solely based on personal preferences. We've armed you with the information, now YOU have to go out and hear the decision.

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# Anachronox

Ion Storm doesn't always deserve to be ridiculed

**N**ow that it's pretty much conventional wisdom that *Daikatana's* gonna blow, what do we have to look forward to from Ion Storm? Well, there's Warren Spector's *Unreal*-based *Deus Ex*, and then there's *Anachronox*. Pitched to the world a couple of years ago, the premise of a console-style RPG melding with the *Quake II* engine psyched people up with some creative and detailed level design. It was definitely a pretty enticing concept if you've ever been sucked in by those crackified Square games like *FFVII* (which Eidos also brought to the PC, possibly as a market tester for the big investment in Tom Hall's pet project).

The way creator Tom Hall and his team are talking about the game now, some two years later, indicates that they're staying true to themselves. Word. They've got



As you know, every diabolical scheme I've ever hatched has been thwarted by Austin Powers... And why is that, ladies and gentlemen?



the sci-fi storyline taken right from the console games — complete with secret alien technology from a long-dead alien race. "From a small-change bodyguard job, the game quickly expands into a huge galactic mystery spanning 12 planets and three dimensions. You guard a guy on his way to a planet. That planet promptly splits in half, and you're pretty sure something's up," explains Hall.

*Anachronox* has quirky character design, complete with the down-on-his-luck hero and the strong female sidekick. It's also got extremely detailed levels, again one of the game's strong points, with over 100 locations at last count. Not only that, the standard RPG gameplay elements like party combat, stat building, and exploration/interaction with NPCs have been faithfully duplicated.

It's in these gameplay elements

## FIVE QUESTIONS

**TOM HALL, ANACHRONOX PROJECT DIRECTOR ANSWERED THE INSIGHTFUL FIVE QUESTIONS.**

**Q: What's it like working next to the *Daikatana* team?**

**A:** Well, in a way it sucks, 'cause you go over there and see cool new stuff and you want to play it, but if you do, you won't get your game done, oh, and Romero's music echoes into my office.

**Q: How would you describe this game for someone who's never heard of it?**

**A:** It's a 3D, third-person sci-fi RPG. It's *Chrono Trigger*/*Final Fantasy VII* meets *Blade Runner* meets *Half-Life* meets *Hitchhiker's Guide* meets *Joe Block*.

**Q: Favorite '80s coming-of-age movie?**

**A:** *Raging Bull*.

**Q: What kind of cool graphical buzzwords have you added to the *Quake II* engine?**

**A:** We've got 24-bit color, 8-bits of translucency, fog, built-in scripting language, APE, skeletal animation, levels of detail, particle effects, and lots of other stuff.

**Q: Why am I surrounded by idiots?**

**A:** He who says he is surrounded by idiots, finds himself in hall of mirrors.

## INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm  
PUBLISHER → Eidos  
RELEASE DATE → "When it's done."  
3D SUPPORT → OpenGL, Direct3D

### INTEREST GAUGE



### THE HYPE

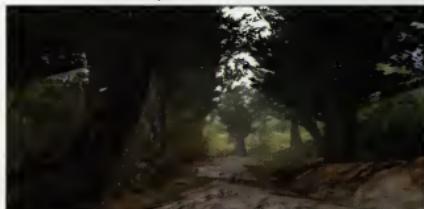
Console RPG design plus the *Quake II* engine from game makers with a track record — for not finishing games.

### THE HURDLE

The Ion Storm track record, delays, and the possibility that this game may not find an audience.

### THE HIT

It's still a long way off, but the care and precision taken over the story line should make for compelling gameplay.



Because you never kill him when you get the chance and you're a dope?



## Anachronox Gallery



You can see that the graphics look measurably better than *QII*, the game on which it was based. Among the improvements: 24-bit color, 8 bits of translucency, fog, skeletal animation, levels of detail, and particle effects. "I don't know what you're talking about, but it's making me horny, baby!"





Anachronox's approximately 500 levels range in size from a room to "the hugest level we can make" (according to Project Director Tom Hall). The choice to go third-person was because "it allows you to take in the whole scene, and to relate to the character." Yeah, baby, yeah!



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## BUTTS OF GAMING

The advent of third-person perspective has meant many hours staring at characters' asses, thereby putting more importance on butts with personality. How well do you know your gaming dairies? Take the test.



- A. MDK (spandex-clad butt)
- B. Lara Croft (English butt)
- C. Shadow Man (undead butt)
- D. Gia (nice ass)
- E. Heretic II (elf butt)
- F. Space Bunnies Must Die (trailer trash butt)
- G. Outcast (voxelicious butt)
- H. John Romero (the butt of our jokes)

► P. 55 How amazing is it to play a video game where characters are sitting around a campfire, talking about regret — and you care?"

That party system should give the combat some tactical depth other than just "point and shoot." Expect to see some combination attacks whereby two or more characters do a special extra ass-kicking attack (à la *Chrono Trigger*). Also, expect to be able to rotate seven members in and out of a playable group of three. And, expect to see "the odd special weapon in a first-person shooter," suggested Hall.

Now for the bit about the graphics. *Anachronox* (a play on



Dr. Evil, wouldn't it be easier to use your knowledge of the future to play the stock market? We could literally make trillions!



You're not quite evil enough. You're semi-evil. You're quasi-evil. You're the margarine of evil. You're the Diet Coke of evil. Just one calorie, not evil enough.

"anachronism" meaning "something not of its time") uses some engine called Quake II, made by some tiny developer in Bumf—k, Texas. But, like *Heretic II*, the game is strictly third-person. Why third-person? "It allows you to take in the whole scene, and to relate to the character. If you want to tell the story through a character, go third-person," says Hall.

Besides the usual slew of graphical improvements, the game also integrates its own scripting language that allows mini-games to be inserted without having to get out of the engine. It's called APE (Anachronox Programming Environment), and so far a maze game and a *Goloxion* clone have been created. Actually, they plan on having a contest to



see who can come up with the best APE game, and the winner will be included in *Anachronox*. The APE language will be part of the demo — to what extent it will have on gameplay is unknown.

One thing definitely worth mentioning is that there will be no multiplayer out of the box — with the promise of a level pack/deathmatch add-on to come. "I have some cool ideas for multiplayer, and I don't want to tack on an 'okay' deathmatch to *Anachronox*. It wouldn't live up to it," says Hall.

The way the game is structured it doesn't seem to lend itself much to multiplayer anyway — the Square games aren't known for their open-endedness, much less their multiplayer. But hey, *Chrono Trigger* was a notable exception with its multiple endings, and branching paths, so uh... hey, all you console RPG fans out there, get excited!

— ED LEE actually seemed enthused about this game. Lost time that happened? Send in your answers on a postcard



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▲ A stealthy entrance is necessary to prevent alerting the guards.



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## DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

## HISTOGRAM | APR. 30 '99 | -

LAST SCORES



## PREVIOUSLY ON VAMPIRE

Our first look at *Vampire* highlighted Nihilistic's adoption of White Wolf's prolific World of Darkness setting, specifically their license of the Q4 Radiant level-editing tool. In this second look, we're going to examine the combat and multiplayer elements, as Nihilistic promises to break new ground in multiplayer RPGs.

# Vampire: The Masquerade

This game sucks (the most obvious strapline in the world)

**W**ith this being our October issue, and the resurgence of interest in all things supernatural (*Blair Witch*, et al.), it's a perfect time to take another look at what's going on with Nihilistic's *Vampire*. On the surface it looks like yet another third-person action/RPG, but it's no cliché (honest!) to say there's a whole lot more to it than that. It's a game that combines a traditional party-based RPG with the storytelling opportunities that come from making your main characters vampires. And these blood-suckers aren't just cookie-cutter hellspawn — they're backed up by literally hundreds of pages of powers, organizations, and history from White Wolf's *Vampire: The Masquerade* pen and paper RPG.

As a vampire, you are driven by the need to feed on the blood of

others, which will give the game a sense of urgency as you keep an eye on your "blood-o-meter" (not the official name). Also, you'll want to get indoors as soon as the sun pops up in the east. Along with learning the ropes, there's a lot of fighting to do. Vampire hunters, monsters, evil vampires, and werewolves all want a little, so it's a good thing you have some other vampires watching your back. All hailing from different clans (groups of vampires with their own ideologies and powers), your teammates will add a lot of tactical depth to the "action RPG"-style clicking combat.

First off, you've got vampiric powers called "disciplines" that range from combat powers to manipulation and stealth. These disciplines include "obfuscation," which will let you get recon on your enemies or give you time to heroically run away. "Presence" will strike fear in your enemies, causing them to drop their weapons as they heroically run away. "Celerity" allows for bursts of supernatural speed in movement and attacks, and "Protean" allows the character to change form into a wolf or a gaseous mist — like, whoa.

Secondly, there are clan-specific powers. Ray Gresko, *Vampire*'s

lead designer, explains, "Pink, a modern day Brujah clan vampire can turn his hands into gigantic feral claws and move in for some of the ol' slice-and-dice. Meanwhile, the Cappadocian clan member may choose to reanimate a dead corpse to attack with its lifeless limbs. The Nosferatu will fade out of sight and appear only long enough to pull a struggling enemy into a dark corner. And don't forget Lily, the beautiful Toreador clan vampire who can mesmerize an enemy into a lovesick trance and then do as she pleases."

Finally, there are your weapons, because what's an RPG without

## INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Nihilistic  
PUBLISHER → Activision  
RELEASE DATE → Q3 '99  
API SUPPORT → Direct3D

## INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXCITED AROUSED

## THE HYPE

Third-person RPG action/adventure with a great license, and it's the first game by some of the people who created *Jedi Knight* for LucasArts.

## THE HURDLE

Finding an audience outside of devotees of the pen and paper game is an obstacle to overcome.

## THE HIT

A system that truly recreates the dynamic interaction of a pen and paper role-playing game is the holy grail of RPGs. Nihilistic may have cracked it. Oh yes, I wanna play this.



I'm gonna be naughty ... I'm gonna be a naughty vampire god!

## FIVE QUESTIONS

RAY GRESKO, PRESIDENT OF NIHILISTIC, BRAVED OUR INCISIVE PROBING (THAT JUST SOUNDS WRONG).

**Q:** What's worse ... the blue screen of death or the black screen of nothingness?

**A:** Actually, the crash I hate the most is the one that resets your video resolution, and crunches all your desktop icons into the upper left corner — gah!

**Q:** I hear you have to fend off vampire hunters. Will Blade or Buffy make cameo appearances?

**A:** In the World of Darkness, Blade would never exist, and Buffy would be fleshcrafed into a nice ornamental lamp before she could make it to homeroom.

**Q:** What games are being played around the office right now?

**A:** I don't know really, since everyone's monitor is facing away from me. Although I do hear a lot of yelling about "frogskins" and frequent requests like "Have you seen my corpse?"

**Q:** What's your favorite vampire movie?

**A:** *Wolf Street*.

**Q:** Would you care for a Hot Pocket? They're good...

**A:** Thanks, but I'm on that new "Red Vines and Surge" diet.



"Turn in your damn preview!" (That's Ed in the helmet.)

'em? Crossbows, stakeguns, battleaxes, and brass knuckles are all at your disposal. With a crossbow, you have a chance of "staking" a vampire, rendering it immobile. Fire is also a powerful weapon against the undead, so expect to see phosphorous grenades that explode into flame among the modern day weapons (your medieval vampire awakens in modern times). Also in the mix are Vampire artifacts such as a blade that sucks blood from its victims.

The other side of the coin is that it takes a massive amount of physical damage to kill a vampire. So, a shotgun blast to the stomach won't slow one down much. "It's much more visceral in this sense, and since the Kindred have the use of enhanced physical and mental powers, everything runs at a higher notch," explains Gresko.

The intensity of all this combat could really get upped a notch further in the multiplayer side. You can go through the single-player game with your friends, or play custom scenarios built yourself through an included editor. That's pretty much what you might

expect. What you might not expect is that a player can assume a kind of "Dungeon Master" role and take over a scenario. Gresko says, "This person has all the capabilities that a tabletop 'DM' has, in terms of speaking for NPCs, adjusting the environment, controlling enemies, and doing out experience at the end of a scene."

Calling this "online moderated roleplaying," Gresko says that another advantage is that the Storyteller can communicate with each player individually. This allows for specific info to be given to a player without the other players knowing. Then, that player

can roleplay the scenario accordingly. "Players have the advantage of a great visual aide (the game itself) and an engine that takes care of any rules that might get in the way of them actually playing their roles." All the locations in the game can be swapped around and linked, so the team feels that there are just as many people out there that are chomping at the bit to create narratives and "interactive fiction experiences" as there are creating things like new levels or mods.

This new feature is something that (to the best of our knowledge) hasn't been attempted yet, and we see this adding a lot of depth to the multiplayer RPG feature found in games like *Baldur's Gate* and *Diablo*. Keep us posted, because I think they're on to something here.

— ED LEE's plot to get out of writing bio lines not only continues, but has expanded to include headlines and folio fillers, too



Some mother—ker's always tryin' to ice skate uphill!!

## BUFFY: CAREER SLAYER

Vampires remind us of Buffy (usually naked, but that's beside the point). Sarah proved she was "the shit" when she won an Emmy and then smartly ditched soaps, but her career has had its ups and downs

1988 → Appears in *Funny Form* with Chevy Chase

1989 → "Girl Talk" T.V. show with Punky Brewster

1993 → Plays Kendall on "All My Children." Wins Emmy, pisses off Susan Lucci

1997 → Lands title role on "Buffy"

1997 → Appears in *I Know What You Breasts Did Last Summer*, dies

1997 → Appears in *Scream 2*, dies

1999 → *Simply Irresistible* proves to be anything but ... wait for it ... simply irresistible

1999 → *Cruel Intentions* aka "The Lesbian Kiss" ... pant, drool, pant



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## DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

## HISTOGRAM

AVG. SCORE: 1.0

## WHO ARE THEY?

French developers' reputations have been tarnished by several dreadful products. Producer David Cage is acutely aware of this, and is ensuring that everyone hears about Omikron's gameplay potential. This group has been together in a smoky Parisian office for two years, putting the final touches on this, their first project.

# Omkron: The Nomad Soul

Where the women are hot and sexy, and I can take them over!

**T**he adventure game isn't dead, in case you've been wondering. It's just merged itself with third-person action games. *Outcast* has broached new ground in depth for this genre, and now another French-made game is about to go a step further.

*Omkron: The Nomad Soul* is an ambitiously large and impressive science fiction journey.

Amidst a haze of these third-person action-adventures, *Omkron* has plenty of original aspects that should set it apart from illustrious competition like the aforementioned *Outcast*, the surprisingly entertaining *Shadow Man*, *Nocturne*, and others. Not least of these features is a soundtrack and quest appearance by the original strange sci-fi rocker, David Bowie. Fortunately, the freaky *Omkron*

story is as strong as the hot marketing bullet-points like new technology features and a huge star name attachment. Unlike conventional adventures where you start with a character and pursue his alter-ego's goals and needs, here the titular *Nomad Soul* concept is an important, even vital element of what you are and how you progress through the game.

This soul of yours can take over denizens of the sprawling, vibrant *Bladerunner*-esque city of *Omkron*, literally overthrowing their lives — but you're not occupying them for their benefit. Starting out as a cop whose partner has just been killed, it's easy to get misled. This cop has a beautiful wife, a great apartment (*Total Recall*, anyone?), and co-workers who hate him and view him with

suspicion. He's trying to solve a mystery, too. But this character is really just a primer for adjusting to the strange world of *Omkron*.

If and when you bite it, you end up taking over another body. Or, alternatively, you can take over someone else without dying (it's called "resurrecting to another character"). There are around 40 different characters to possess, each distinguishable from the otherwise bland civilian population by their notably more creative dress and look. Once you've taken over a new character, you can't switch back to a previous one. And while each character has its own story, you soon discover that they're merely tools for your own more important mission. That mission: Defeat the evil demons after both you and the city.

Technically, *Omkron* is looking pretty impressive. Imagine the gritty dark urban jungle of *Syndicate* Wors from a street-level perspective, and you have some idea of how the place looks, or at least, the first section of it (locations diversify as you uncover more of the plot). Traffic whizzes by, pedestrians scurry about, and taxi drivers are still incredibly unfit for the road.

Combat is constantly being tweaked through the continuing development cycle, and consists of hand-to-hand martial arts sequences (similar to console-style fighting games), and first-person shooting episodes. The two are not interchangeable however, and as of now, once you get into a fight, no matter how hard you try, you can't escape. In our pre-release build, the shoot-out elements featured scripted enemy movements that really didn't work well. Past that, there are a lot of branching conversations ▶ p. 69



## INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Quantic Dreams  
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive  
RELEASE DATE → November 1999  
API SUPPORT → Direct 3D

## INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXCITED AROUSED

## THE HYPE

Taking over bodies in a dark, cyberpunk future with demons after your Nomad ass. Cool. Plus, babes galore!

## THE HURDLE

It's been a long time in the making, and constant tweaking of the combat system also means they haven't quite gotten it yet. It's questionable if they ever will.

## THE HIT

The storyline and expansive gameplay are really interesting and likely to be enough for many to want to play it.



"POW!" says the bad-ass. Most demons could use a good, swift, kick in the head just like this.



## Omkron Gallery

"I'm your private dancer, do what you want me to do..."

Any game that features a red light district, the attendant strip bars, and affable "dancers" gets props from everyone here at PCXL.



(Above) The scripted enemy movement tries to create a cinematic effect to the combat, but misses the mark by not being fluid enough. Likewise, a decent console-style beat 'em up has yet to be done well on the PC. And before you complain, you need to talk to the girl (left) in the game. If this scares you ...

## FIVE QUESTIONS

WE STUCK PHILIP CAMPBELL, SENIOR DESIGNER OF OMIKRON, WITH STICKS AND NEEDLES UNTIL HE DID SOME SOUL SEARCHING AND DECIDED TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS.

## Q: What's it like to work with Bowie?

**A:** We tried the usual Publisher's thing ... get him in for a couple of photos for the box, license a few old songs to slap into the worldwide marketing campaign, but David was having none of that. We ended up with a totally original soundtrack, gaming's craziest virtual concerts, tons of motion-captured dialogue, and the world's most beautiful wife.

## Q: Are the women in the game indicative of what French women look like?

**A:** All physical and facial movement was collected under extreme lab conditions, from the real-life posturing of suitable French "filles." Interestingly, it took so minutes for a team of two to complete the motion-capture sessions for Camir, the dirty old mechanic, whereas the motion-captured gyrations of Anissa the table-dancer took at least two weeks of intensive study by all 35 of the team.

## Q: Do the people who can receive a new soul have their own in-depth past?

**A:** All the "incarnables" (about 40) have different attributes, backstories, and professions ... some have their own apartments, some have vast riches, and others may harbor the explosive Megazooka, or tickets to a subversive concert performance. Kay, the starring character, has the most detailed previous life. Still, you may take Imane31 back to her apartment to admire her record collection, or drive wildly through the Red Light district as Slider Pilot Dakm'e.

## Q: Give us the lowdown on the locales of Omikron city.

**A:** Omikron actually consists of four huge zones, each having a unique personality such as Qualsar, the red-light district, or Lahore, the virtual Venice of the upper class. Under the Dome, the dreamy, misty canals of Lahore are only a short walk away from the tight, quasi-Arabic streets of Jaunpur or the grungy rooftops of Anekabah.

## Q: In the future, will all women really wear such little clothing? When will this occur? I'd like for it to be soon.

**A:** You'll be very happy to know, then, that Omikron is in fact set in the NEAR future. So, indulge yourself, we don't mind what you wear, who you enter, or when you cross that bridge. You might even "find yourself," in a kind of "Buddhist with guns" way.



These two dweebs would sure like to take over this chick's body.

◀ p. 67 to explore, and puzzles that require not only seeking out and using items, but also taking over other bodies who are more adept at using them.

Gearing up to be a five-CD soul trip-fest, *Omkron* has been a long time in the making. Initial concerns over the plain dumb gunplay and lame-o-matic fist fights have yet to

be eased. With it nearly done we'll defer judgement on whether it's worth giving your body up for.

— JASON D'APRILE went out of his way to take screen shots of the tapless dancers in the game. Does that make him a bad person?



"Hush, Hush! Keep it down, now! Voices carry ..."



Game character or P.R. rep?



This is also where the PCXL staff hangs out after hours.

## HALF-NAKED LIFE

Nudity in video games: Is it a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Who are we to judge? Who Cares? Do you want us to just shut up and get to showing you polygonal naughty bits?

## OMIKRON

**JUST WHO'S NEKKID** → Nekkid, the aquatic nymph.  
**REACTION** → Aroused, but she's gonna have to do something about those glowing red eyes of hers

## GIANTS

**JUST WHO'S NEKKID** → Nekkid, the aquatic nymph.  
**REACTION** → Aroused, but she's gonna have to do something about those glowing red eyes of hers

## DIABLO 2

**JUST WHO'S NEKKID** → Nekkid, the psycho, six-armed demon-bitch of her nightmares, the damsel in distress.  
**REACTION** → Strangely excited and yet somewhat frightened

## CUSTER'S

## REVENGE

**JUST WHO'S NEKKID** → The poor, disgraced Native-American woman as well as the puny, pixelated, pickup-people, Custer himself.  
**REACTION** → Oh, those beautiful breasts! I must have them!

## TOMB RAIDER

**JUST WHO'S NEKKID** → Thanks to the unofficial Nude Raider patch, Lara can be seen speaking through Tris, 2, and 3 without her trademark short shorts and tight tank top.  
**REACTION** → Fully erect and ready to rock ... oh wait, she is still just a video game character. Damn it!



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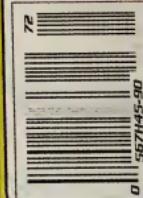
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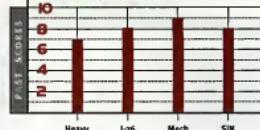


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# Interstate '82

... Or if you lived through the '80s, "The Highway to Hell"

**F**ashion sense, music appreciation, and historical hindsight move in a cyclical motion in the good ol' U.S. of A. In 1989 the idea that anyone would get dewy-eyed and nostalgic over 1976 was just plain silly. We still had our "What were we thinking?" attitude towards the '70s, the pain of disco still painfully fresh. Flash forward to 1996 — the '70s are hot again as GenXers paint rose-tinted spectacles on views of their childhood. Into this atmosphere came Activision's *Interstate '76*, an absolute blast of car combat action featuring characters proudly resplendent in afros and bell-bottoms. A healthy dose of atmosphere and attitude backed by dynamic action and gameplay provided a treat for the few who gave it a try.

Now it's 1999 and the sequel, *Interstate '82*, moves the game's storyline forward some six years to

the decade of skinny ties, Alex P. Keaton, Duran Duran, and a certain cowboy/actor/Republican President. *Interstate '82*'s development hasn't been trouble-free, however. Promised features such as the ability to ride a motorcycle and helicopter have been scrapped and the game's been delayed to the point where many gamers have simply forgotten about it. Then there's the decade itself — can we look back at 1982 and laugh, rather than cringe?

The story takes place in an alternate universe ... it's 1976, the U.S. and the rest of the world are in a severe depression, so bad that much of the country is in anarchy, ravaged by traveling bands who strap heavy weaponry onto vintage muscle cars. The only people who can stand up to these bands are intrepid auto vigilantes like Groove Champion and his best friend Taurus, a poetry-spouting combination of Shaft and Linc from "The Mod Squad."

Now, in 1982, Taurus is called out of retirement by Groove's sister Skye to help rescue him and

uncover a secret government plot to funnel money to the Contras. *Interstate '82* takes the neon-hued, break-dancing, "Oh what a feeling" *Flashdance*-themed pop culture that defined the '80s and turns it into an atmospheric racing game. For example, Taurus now sports a jheri-curled neatness and wears a "Miami Vice" vintage white linen suit, pink shirt, and deck shoes with no socks. Groove and Skye embody more punk-like styles with multi-colored mohawks, zebra-striped shirts, and Ray-Bans. Best of all, the music for the game is provided by New Wave poster boys Devo.

All that atmosphere, however, is nothing without a rock-solid game to back it up, and despite the omission of various minor features from the original design doc, *I-82* looks set to deliver the goods. Really, *Interstate '82* isn't such a radical departure from the original game. Rather, the game tightens up the interface, jacks up the graphics quotient, and emphasizes the action elements. You'll also get behind the wheel of some familiar '80s vehicles, such as the General Lee, the "Knight Rider" Trans Am, and the Marty McFly Deorean (although they won't be able to use the actual names in the game.)

## INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Activision  
PUBLISHER → Activision  
RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999  
API SUPPORT → Direct3D

### INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXITED ANNOYED

### THE HYPE

Return to the era of skinny ties, heavy weapons and muscle cars. The '70s are done — let's get funky with the '80s.

### THE HURDLE

Recently-cut features and game delays have cooled interest in what should have been a hot property.

### THE HIT

The original game was criminally overlooked by gamers. If *Interstate '82* is just more of the same — the same is pretty damn hot.



Word problem: A three-ton van hits a 220-pound man at 120 mph. How far will his head fly?



These kids today with their hula hoops and their high-powered machine guns.

## FIVE QUESTIONS

**I-82 PRODUCER ZACH NORMAN ANSWERED THE FURIOUS FIVE, THOUGH HE DIDN'T EXACTLY KNOW THAT HE WAS DOING IT ...**

**Q:** Man, the '80s were cool, but those 'Bos sucked ass. Discuss.

**A:** I got so much feedback from gamers who all said, "Why are you doing the 'Bos? The 'Bos sucked!" To those people I usually say, "Well so did the '70s and look what we did with them."

**Q:** Okay, we believe you. So how does the decade work for this particular game setting?

**A:** What we've done with the 'Bos in this game is to take the extreme edges of the style of the time and mold them into an atmosphere that's simultaneously funny yet evocative and effective.

**Q:** Evidently this took a long time to get right. What's up with the delays?

**A:** We delayed the game to give gamers the kind of great gameplay experience they were demanding. We've got a lot to live up to.

**Q:** Fighting on foot is a brave new world for this game universe. Can anyone say Quake-clone? How will it affect the game balance?

**A:** Quite simple, if a pedestrian has an argument with a car, the pedestrian loses. But there are incentives built in to take out the drivers with more carefully aimed shots, rather than completely destroying a car, since you can take it over on the battlefield if it's better than yours.

**Q:** What's the goofiest thing you did, said, or wore in the 'Bos?

**A:** Did: Worked at McDonald's. Said: "Can I take your order?" Wore: A brown polyester uniform and a paper hat.

## BOS SLANG

If you're going to take a trip back to 1982, you'd better know the lingo. This short phrase guide should help.

**PHRASE → "MINT"**  
**DEFINITION →** The very, very best.  
**EXAMPLE →** "Man, that new Cure album is MINT!"

**PHRASE → "BODACIOUS"**  
**DEFINITION →** Bestiful.  
**EXAMPLE →** "Man, that Phoebe Cates is one BODACIOUS babe!"

**PHRASE → "BITCHIN"**  
**DEFINITION →** Superb.  
**EXAMPLE →** "That's a pretty BITCHIN' Camaro, dude!"

**PHRASE → "YUPPIE"**  
**DEFINITION →** Obnoxious Baby Boomer with expensive taste.  
**EXAMPLE →** "Could someone please kill that YUPPIE in the BMW?"

The game's stunning new graphics are provided by Activision's own Dark Side engine that's already debuted to critical acclaim in *Heavy Gear 2*. New settings include an incredibly well-detailed simulation of the Las Vegas Strip, multi-level sewers, parking garages, and even a top-secret Army base. You can create your own tracks fairly easily, too.

*I-82* sports new weapons, countermeasures, and armor, all of which are now under the gamer's control with a new upgraded load-

out system. Cars are now divided into squares, similar to *Diablo*, and can carry any piece of equipment. Among the new equipment is an ECM jammer that can knock out an opponent's electronics and a carbide cutter (that little knife on the hubcap to blow out the other guys' tires). Also new is the reliance on getting out of your vehicle, adding a *Redline*-like strategy to the action. Still, we're assured that the vehicle combat focus won't be sacrificed on the alter to the Quake-clone gods.

Certainly, rumors of *Taurus'* demise have been greatly exaggerated. If *Interstate '82* won't radically move the series forward, it will tighten up the gameplay and supply another dose of the style and attitude that were so effective in *Interstate '76*. Now, if I could just remember where I left my stonewashed jeans and Members Only jacket.

— ALLEN RAUSCH once appeared on MTV's "Remote Control" with a "Flock of Seagulls" haircut



Oddly enough, this was a big part of my driver's test in 1986.

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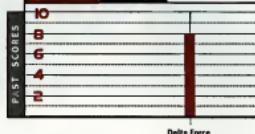


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## DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

## HISTOGRAM AVG. SCORE: 8



# Delta Force 2

The last hope for gamers to get a real workout?

If you're like the PCXL staff at all, you'd probably rather sit through the entire *Riverdance* video than actually exercise. That's why we gamers need to find alternative ways of raising our pulse — ways we truly enjoy. You've probably sensed your heart racing during a particularly brutal *Quake III: Arena* deathmatch, or felt just a tiny bead of sweat on your forehead in the throes of a tense *Rainbow Six* standoff. So you know why we try to call games "exercise" — and why *Delta Force 2* offers such promise.

What NovaLogic's first effort lacked in single-player mode, it delivered in sheer multiplayer fun, with the panic and pumping adrenaline of snipers circling your encampment, and you trying to fight your way out, cursing the

whole time. The game was a nice mélange of action and strategy — the perfect way to get your rocks off with *Quake*-style firefights while balancing team management and positioning beyond the *Quake* strategy of "MUST ... GET ... ROCKET ... LAUNCHER."

With *Delta Force 2* there's all the traditional sequel improvements, from new weapons and equipment to cleaner graphics and improved AI. (When has a company not said their new game was smarter?) Fortunately, NovaLogic also took the time to add features that will deliver significant advances to this tactical team-based game.

For instance, weather will be a big factor, with fog, rain, snow, and wind affecting the way you plan and play missions. A sniper's job on a foggy night will be much harder than on a sunny, perfect-for-head-popping day. Perhaps even more critical to strategy and gameplay will be buildings and surfaces that are penetrable by bullets. No longer are you safe from the prying eyes of sniping enemies just because you've gone inside. Make sure your hunker-down spot is a concrete bunker, because that grass hut won't offer much protection. Our early look at the technology highlighted how

different materials exhibit varying degrees of penetrability — depending on the shooter's distance, a bullet may go through wood, but it will definitely stop at concrete. It's a feature that promises to bring tactical fighting to a higher, more intense level. We can't wait to snipe a PC Gamer head through a door for the first time — a feat that will no doubt be repeated ad infinitum.

Knowing that multiplayer is key to the game's success, NovaLogic is also including its new Voice-Over-Net technology. With a microphone or a headset, you'll be able to bark orders or warnings instantly during

## INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → NovaLogic  
PUBLISHER → NovaLogic  
RELEASE DATE → Fall 1999  
API SUPPORT → D3D

## INTEREST GAUGE



## THE HYPE

NovaLogic's squad-based sequel has new missions, improved graphics, and voice technology which will allow players to chat during games.

## THE HURDLE

Quite a few. It's going to be tough standing out among some high-profile competitors, including *Rogue Spear* and *SWAT 3*. And, overcoming some serious framerate issues may prove to be a daunting task.

## THE HIT

Judging from its success with the first game, we're confident NovaLogic can address the framerate issues with *DF2* to keep the brand's good name untarnished.



Believe your eyes, these are voxel-rendered environments, all without the aid of a 3D accelerator. The game's new missions will send players inside and out, and allow them to shoot through walls.

## FIVE QUESTIONS

**Q: Can Delta Force 2's voxel graphics hold up against all the new rendering techniques made possible by Voodoo 3 and TNTs?**

**A:** We think they can. First, they're rendered in 32-bit color, which is not the case with Voodoo3. And 3D accelerators like the Voodoo3 and TNTs only work with polygon-based graphics — lots of flat surfaces, shaded and overlaid by flat bitmaps to create the illusion of greater detail. With voxel space graphics, every single dot that makes up an image can have its own height, so you can create terrain that's completely devoid of flat surfaces. It rises and falls naturally, just like terrain in the real world — very important for a squad-based combat game with lots of outdoor action.

**Q: Were the fine Delta Force movies made by Chuck Norris an inspiration for the Delta Force games?**

**A:** Actually, we like the new Delta Force movies with Emile Hudson better. As a former *Ghost Buster*, he's used to kicking ass and taking names. Although Lee Marvin is my hero.

**Q: How will Delta Force 2 stand out among the other big squad-based games on the way, such as *Rogue Spear*, *Team Fortress 2*, and *SWAT 3*?**

**A:** Gamers will probably have all of these titles in their library so that they can experience the different strengths and features offered by each game. Delta Force 2 will deliver the same addictive gameplay that fans loved in the first game.

**Q: Who would win in a fight: Romo or the entire A-Team?**

**A:** Rambo would smoke them easily. He always hits his target, the A-Team is always missing. Unless, of course, BA takes the spare parts from a 1973 Buick and creates some fearsome cannon that shoots a head of lettuce, that might give them the advantage.

**Q: Do you see team play, squad-based titles as the next big trend in gaming?**

**A:** Definitely. Online squad-based titles are booming with the help of games like Delta Force 2, which will allow up to 50 players per game with online services such as NovaWorld and Voice-Over-Net. Gamers enjoy challenging each other's tactics, sniping, and CQB skills (Close Quarters Battle). Online gaming with human opponents is one of the best ways to do this.



This looks like a quiet, grassy knoll ... but imagine 50 geeky gamers yelling at each other through Voice-Over-Net.

combat, pumping the drama to the level experienced by LAN players sitting in different parts of their office. Something tells us though, that the feature will communicate more swearing than actual game tactics and orders. Imagine a game with 50 players (the number NovaLogic claims the final game will support) and four teams, with dozens of people talking smack at once. Cover your ears, gentle souls.

NovaLogic's trademark voxel (volumetric pixels) graphics are back for Df2, and despite Voodoo/TNT naysayers, the game's graphics remain very sharp. NovaLogic is calling this iteration of the engine Voxel Space 32, and will finally include Direct3D support out of the box, for those with AGP video cards. Though it lacks the high-sheen, filtered look of Glide games (and NovaLogic confirmed that they wouldn't incorporate the anti-aliasing techniques that radically smoothed *Outpost*'s voxelated terrain), voxels allow the developers to create huge outdoor environments. The 3D nature of voxels

also offers several advantages for a team-based game, allowing programmers and artists to create in true 3D the perfect hiding and sneaking areas, like fields of tall grass and rocky crags and crevices. The only knock on the voxel engine so far is speed, as early looks at *Delta Force 2* demonstrated some fairly chunky framers. While release is still a ways off to be sure, it's a problem that desperately needs addressing — most gamers won't explore the game's cool new features if they're chugging along at a pastray 15fps.

Still, with the laundry list of new toys (an underwater pistol and rifle, time-delay grenades, tracers on some weapons, and a field surveillance video camera among others) and new voice and game-play innovations, Df2 should heat up the battle among squad games. At least we hope so. We really need the exercise.

— MIKE MORRISSEY is the national spokesman for *One Fondo's* Workout



One of the game's most promising missions has you either jumping into a hot zone or picking paratroopers from the air. With D3D support, at least poly-based buildings will look smoother.

## CHUCKS OF NOTE

Inspired by the tender Chuck Norris *Delta Force* movies of the '80s, PCXL contemplates other Chucks who have touched our lives in special ways.

## CHUCK E. CHEESE

**KNOWN FOR:** Being a seven-foot-tall mouse who loves video games, bad pizza, and jug bands  
**INSPIRATIONAL FOR:** Convincing our parents it was normal to pay for our video game



CHUCK E. CHEESE

## CHUCKY

**KNOWN FOR:** Terrorizing scores of bad actors, despite the fact that he's a one-foot-tall doll  
**INSPIRATIONAL FOR:** Teaching us the wonders of swear words  
**ARRESTED FOR:** Ditching alimony payments to the Cabbage Patch doll he married and divorced in August, 1986



CHUCKY

## CHUCK CUNNINGHAM

**KNOWN FOR:** Appearing in the TV series of "Happy Days"  
**INSPIRATIONAL FOR:** Abusing his wife to get out of his shirt before The Fonz became a '70s cult phenomenon  
**ARRESTED FOR:** Loving Joanie ... just not in the good way Chachi did



CHUCK CUNNINGHAM

## CHUCK OSBORN

**KNOWN FOR:** PCXL editor, and a brief standoff with police in a Lincoln, Nebraska clock tower  
**INSPIRATIONAL FOR:** His inability to get to work before Ed Lee, despite not having a car  
**ARRESTED FOR:** Making harassing calls to Kathy Lee Gifford, claiming she was her son Cody's "longtime companion"



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\*Actual model: FLSTF Fatboy



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# REVIEWS

## The Room ... It's ... Growing ... Darker

Just as PC games have an unnerving fascination with post-apocalyptic futures ("In the game you control Mittens, a fluffy kitten that must fight through post-nuclear New York using only her wits and a scratching post"), suddenly game makers are rapt by darkness. This month, PCXL looks at no less than three games shy-ing from the light, with *Dungeon Keeper 2*, *Darkstone*, and *Shadow Man* all brought into the harsh light of day that is the PCXL review. Considering the copious amounts of ass in some games these days, it's understandable that developers would try to make things as dim as possible. It's much easier to crank down the dimmer switch than to actually spend time honing the textures and tweaking the engine. Fear not, PCXL will rage against the dying light, turning the high beams of scrutiny on these scurrying bugs, letting you know if you can game with the lights off.

### WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

The brightest star in the gaming galaxy. Like the Enterprise high beams bounced off Patrick Stewart's forehead



Classically brilliant, the light of a million hippies holding candles, singing songs, and selling Coca-Cola



Your favorite flashlight, an indispensable illuminator you'd never give up, but with a few flaws - like batteries



Dusk on a summer night, perfect for enjoying the moment, but not bright enough to consider a classic



Brighter than most of the ink spot games on the market, and shiny enough to pull itself above average



Las Vegas at night. It's glowing and downright bright in some spots, but dark and scary in many others



A flash bulb that blinds you into thinking it's good, followed by the stars and swirlies that define "ass"



Like Flock of Seagulls: A single flash, followed by darkness, drugs, alcohol, and dwarf-tossing



That penlight you use on a camping trip, but it certainly won't protect you against the Blair Witch



The darkest recesses of your mind couldn't imagine anything this horrific. Keep it locked in a dark closet



### KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this mighty logo. If you see the PC ACCELERATOR Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

### SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgettable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Head our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.

### LIGHT GAMES

These are games so bright, we shield our eyes from their goodness, the ones that illuminate our favorite bars after last call, allowing us to see what that girl we were talking to all night really looks like

#### SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Publisher: EA  
Developer: Looking Glass

Rating: 9

How good is it? An atmospheric action-style RPG with graphics that aren't state-of-the-art, but a storyline that creeps you out and pulls you through the game

#### SHADOW MAN

Publisher: Acclaim  
Developer: Iguana

Rating: 8

How good is it? A gorgeous game with terrific gameplay elements and an excellent story, it almost changes our mind about comic book licenses

#### DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Publisher: EA  
Developer: Bullfrog

Rating: 7

How good is it? An excellent sequel with killer graphics and beautiful effects, a perfect go-your-own-way game design

#### FALLOUT 2

Publisher: Interplay  
Developer: Black Isle Studio

Rating: 9

How good is it? One of the few bright spots for interplay in the last year, *Fallout 2* puts the roleplay back into RPG

### ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framers, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

### ACCELE-RATED

#### CHIPSET



### RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 - no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards - our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

### GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framers, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

### SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

### DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

### DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

### RATING



**DEVELOPER** → Irrational Games  
**PUBLISHER** → Electronic Arts  
**REQUIRED** → P400, 32MB RAM,  
 1.8GB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, 3D-compatible 3D accelerator card  
**IDEAL** → PII 400, 64MB RAM, 512MB hard drive, whopping big AGP 3D card

# System Shock 2

Consider it a much needed and welcome shock to your system

## ACCELE-RATED

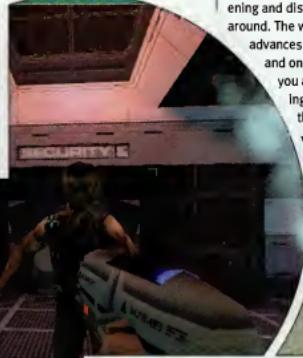
Both TNT and Voodoo cards performed adequately. S3 is not a game that pushes the boundaries of graphical excellence. In typical fashion, the TNT highlighted sharper images in general, although the difference in effects was barely noticeable.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D



At long last, the sequel to one of PC gaming history's most under-appreciated titles has arrived. For the many who missed the original *System Shock* (it's nearly impossible to run on non-DOS-based machines), *System Shock 2* is nothing like your usual action game. Part first-person shooter, part roleplaying adventure, it has more plot and intelligence than any other in the genre. Including — gasp — *Half-Life*.



In the original, you were a lone hacker battling an evil AI named SHODAN. This time around you're a soldier aboard humanity's first faster-than-light starship, the Von Braun. After awakening from cryogenic sleep, you find your body filled with cybernetic implants, and the Von Braun littered with dead bodies, security cameras that watch for any movement, gun turrets gone haywire and horrific monsters that creep through the hallways lustng for blood.

*System Shock 2* is, first off, easily one of the most outright frightening and disturbing games around. The well-written story line advances through crew logs and ongoing voice mails, as you are tasked with making your way through the ship, discovering

the source of the horrors, and trying to find a way out. *System Shock 2*'s 3D engine isn't state of the art, but looks good, effectively conveying the sharp lines of the spacecraft, while the creatures are well animated and detailed.

Music is minimal, but effective, voice acting is top notch, sound effects are incredible, and the game reeks with suspense and atmosphere. The sheer effect of hearing a psychotic zombie lamenting his state, or maniacal cyborg midwives tending their alien eggs and spewing out evilsounding, almost Mary Poppins-like motherly statements is chilling. You'll hesitate before opening doors, hide in shadows hoping monsters won't notice, and jump right out of your chair when one comes rampaging towards you.



(At right) Anyone who would shop at some cheap-ass outlet deserves to be treated like this.



At times like this, manly men (like us) prefer to ... run away very, very fast!

On top of that, searching dead bodies for new logs, items, and keycards is an important element. Crew logs hold valuable clues that often lead to pass codes and keys for opening doors to new areas. The interface is rather complex, since you have limited inventory space and must manage it carefully, but aside from that, control is typical of normal first-person shooters and easy to master.

## SYSTEM SHOCKS

A sequel that is actually better than the original — now there's a system shock! Here's a few more shocks to the system of a typical PCX! reader

### WEB UPDATES

**SHOCK VALUE** → Once upon a time, www.pcxl.com was updated daily, but lately our tired, over-worked staff updates with the regularity of a constipated old man with an insatiable appetite for cheese.

### NO STAFF DEATHS

**SHOCK VALUE** → Ever since the bug-biting we've had a staff member suffer mysterious deaths or just disappear... That's what they get for wanting a raise — damn ingrates!

### ERROR-FREE ISSUES

**SHOCK VALUE** → This one could be deadly. We usually place 3-45 mistakes (on purpose of course) in each issue to make our readers feel smart.

### A NEW PICTURE OF GIA

**SHOCK VALUE** → We're pretty much used this same picture of Gia since her first issue, leading to much debate about whether our lovely and talented intern is actually real (she is, really).



And then I caught a fish this big! Honest! And if you don't believe me, I'll eat your brains.

The Von Braun is huge, and all the levels are interconnected, giving you a very real sense of being in a gigantic ship. While System Shock 2 is definitely an action game, your character gets built up and, to some extent, created in a traditional RPG fashion. Initially, you make choices about what training to focus on (weaponry, technical, or psionic), but throughout the game, you can acquire cybernetic modules that can be used to "buy" upgrades to skills and abilities. Terminal, security, and lock-hacking skills can be upgraded, as well as your ability to research unknown materials, handle new guns, gain psionic abilities, and repair and maintain weapons.

This free reign over how your character develops and what skills he specializes in gives System Shock 2 a huge boost in playability over any other FPS. Progressing as a marine is far different than if you choose to specialize in psi powers,

and each class uses different tactics for survival. Since you start out extremely weak, System Shock 2 is frustratingly hard for about the first third of the game.

Guns degrade rapidly for some obscure reason and jam up when their condition rating drops too low. Ammunition can be bought through vending machines, found on dead bodies, or lying around, but running out is a constant worry. Jumping is mysteriously unresponsive at times, and it's far too easy to get hung up on obstacles. Also, the cooperative multiplayer mode will only appear via a patch (which should be out now).

If you can get over the exceedingly steep learning curve of the game, you'll find the most riveting single-player action-adventure around. Even when frustrating the hell out of you, it's hard to stop playing since the game weaves such an incredibly intelligent, scary and often riveting plot, complete

with unexpected twists — with you in the middle. And, it's all supported by challenging gameplay and extremely intense action.

The real feat in System Shock 2 is how it makes you feel like a part of its damned frightening world. And when you finally finish, you'll be hoping for a System Shock 3.

— JASON D'APRILE, *much like SHODAN, is everywhere and sees all. Be afraid, be very, very afraid*

## GRAPHICS

Solid and atmospheric. Water effects are quite cheesy, but character animation is excellent.

## SOUND

Sound effects will keep your spine chilled, voice acting is excellent, and the music is effective.

## DEPTH

RPG character development in a fairly non-linear interconnected world lead to a horde of possibilities, though game progression itself is fairly linear.

## DESIGN

Intense pacing, great plotting and intelligent map layouts, in addition to a great character enhancement development system.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Great design, fantastic story
- RPG-style character growth
- Atmospheric, scary, involving, enthralling

### Minuses

- The engine is getting old
- The learning curve is steep
- Gun jams and jumping should be more polished



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**DEVELOPER** → Appeal  
**PUBLISHER** → Infogrames  
**REQUIRED** → P200 MMX, 32MB RAM,  
500MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM  
**IDEAL** → PII 450, 128MB RAM, RX CD-  
ROM, EAX sound card, voxel-love

# Outcast

Because not everything needs extra "hardware" to have great curves and bumps

## ACCELE-RATED

This puppy is software-only, though it looks better than most 3D card required games. Voxels are the technology 3DFX/Nvidia et al would love to see die a horrible death, and because of that, it probably will.

## VIVA LA FRANCE!

Infogrames, Hewlett-Packard, and Vivendi are now (thanks to many purchases) some of the largest companies in the gaming industry — and they're French! We decided to take a look at what the French have given us thus far. We discovered that these Frenchies aren't so bad after all.

**FRENCH FRIES** → Mmm... — greasy fried potato bits... the very core of our fattening American diets and the noggin of a date with Don Egger.

**FRENCH KISSING** → Spit-exchanging, tongue-nuzzling fun. Without it, the American soap opera would have died years ago.

**STATUE OF LIBERTY** → The very symbol of America, the lady of liberty serves as a constant reminder that the French aren't so nudge akir all.

**FRENCH TOAST** → Candy coated breakfast gold → and it even counts as a meal.

**"FRENCHY"** → This beauty school dropout was the perfect comic relief in the American classic *Grease*.

**I**t's starting to get hard to tell all these third-person "action/adventure" games apart, but here's one that you'd be hard-pressed to mistake for anything else. More than another action game, *Outcast* is distinctively French and surprisingly different.

The most notable aspect in this heyday of 3D-accelerated graphical glitz is that it doesn't use any expensive hardware, yet still manages to be one of the most outright beautiful games available. The voxel-based engine creates a truly stunning world, filled with incredible contoured landscapes. The buildings, towns, and characters sport a refined detail, though resolution caps out at 512x384.

Since no hardware RAM is touched, it's a processor hog. With much of the detail turned off, the sun turns into the ugly duckling. Even in high detail, characters at long range are blurred, forcing you to rely on clothing color to distinguish enemy soldiers from innocent natives. The orchestrated score, performed by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, is exceptional, while voice acting and sound effects help bring this stylized alien world to life.

As Cutter Slade, a buff, gruff, intellectual GI Joe, you're sent to this world to save the Earth after a probe mission goes disastrously



The search for polygons and sharp edges came up empty.

wrong, but find yourself proclaimed the savior of this new land by the natives, a race called the Talons. Tyranny is rampant, and the Talons are looking for a hero. Beleaguered, you're forced to comply, since the Talons won't help you locate your missing teammates and the probe unless you accommodate their whims.

So you're stuck wandering through a completely open world, finding resources with which to create needed supplies, and sneaking past or fighting opponents. The game's openness is impressive but imposing, and knowing what to do next and where to go can be a confusing trial and error process. The AI is very intriguing — natives remember your deeds and tell one another of your exploits; they get tired, thirsty, and hungry, and go about their daily lives.

Conversations, finding objects and natives, fighting, running to other locations, and sneaking about are the core gameplay requirements. Indeed, stealth is vital since combat is extremely difficult. Until you find a way to start weakening the soldiers (by cutting off their food supply, among other things), they are incredibly tough. This is further compounded by the way the game tends to get a little choppy during firefights and, on top of that, accurate aiming is often extremely difficult.

Stuck in an odd middle ground between true adventure gaming and third-person action, *Outcast* may have trouble finding an audi-

ence. It's a great adventure game, but less than stellar combat is bound to turn off many. Still, this is a beautiful, involving game and, amidst a sea of me-too clones, deserves to be played.

— JASON D'APRILE is something of an *outcast* himself, yet still a damn nice guy (no matter what Rob Smith says)

## GRAPHICS

Beautiful terrain, impressive buildings, great looking characters, and incredible water effects, but distant objects are muddy.

## SOUND

High quality cinematic score, solid voice acting, and great sound effects.

## DEPTH

The non-linear structure, deep AI of both the natives and soldiers, and general gameplay make this a long, involving and complex game.

## DESIGN

The non-linear structure and difficult combat make this game tough, with ambitious design and immersive, very distinctive gameplay.

## RATING

### Pluses

- Fantastic graphics and sound
- Excellent and semi-life-like AI
- Long play life in a fascinating world

### Minuses

- Combat can be very hard
- Open design = confusing progression
- High system requirements to get detail



Cutter Slade knows that even in a harsh alien world, funky fashion sense is important.

**NICE TO SEE COPS EAT SOMETHING  
BESIDES JELLY DOUGHNUTS!**



No, you're not paranoid, man. They are out to get you. Luckily, you've come prepared with a beast of a car and the guts to run it to the redline. Watch the gap grow between you and the cops dude, as the gap between your accelerator and the floorboard disappears.



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Sega Dreamcast

To order direct call: 1-800-245-7744

DEVELOPER	→ Delphine
PUBLISHER	→ G.O.D.
REQUIRED	→ P133, 32MB RAM, 32MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 030-compatible card
IDEAL	→ PII 266, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM

# Darkstone

G.O.D. presents ... *Diablo II?*

## ACCELE-RATED

Darkstone isn't exactly a 3D clinic, but a good card will help out with some "value-added" lighting effects and poly-pushing when there are lots of enemies on screen.

### TNT2



### VOODOO 2



### VOODOO 1



### API SUPPORT: Glide



Muscular heroes have been wasting animated skeletons since, well, at least *Jason and the Argonauts*.



Isn't that chick on the left the one that left The Spice Girls?

**D**idn't you just love *Diablo*? Boy, I did. And so did the corporate chiefs of every game publisher in the world, including those guys at the "creator-driven" Gathering of Developers. You just can't argue with the kind of profits a two million unit-selling title brings.

Coming to us straight from the wilds of France, Delphine Software's *Darkstone* ramps up *Diablo*-style gameplay with a snazzy 3D graphics engine. The look of the game is a delight. Character models are unique and expressive, and the scary-looking monsters are equally well-distinguished. Towns and villages are actually interesting to explore, and the painstakingly detailed work in the dungeons is excellent.

Gameplay...? Well, it's *Diablo*. Where do we even begin to draw the blatantly obvious *Diablo* comparisons? You start off in town, learning the locations of the weaponsmith, healing lady, armory, and every other place you'll need to attend to aid the development of your characters.

Then it's off through the woods, where frightening monsters swarm on you right away and you have to fight your way to the dungeon entrance. Sound familiar?



### Should this game should be called *Diablastone* or *Darklo*?

Once you climb down the ladder, you're in a *Diablo* dungeon. The camera views cycle from isometric to top-down, but the action is identical — skeletons, orcs, and other assorted beasties try to drop you in your tracks while you claw your way deeper, in search of treasure and mini-quest artifacts.

There are a few new twists, such as interaction with ghosts of adventurers slain in the dungeon, but mainly you're just wasting the millions of evil with a barrage of mouse-clicks, then returning top-side when you get hungry or need to get stocked with better gear.

With a greater emphasis on magic than *Diablo*, *Darkstone* makes things quite a bit more interesting. You play with two characters at a time (from any number of options from the character creation roster), and the partnership of wizards with warriors makes for some fun, *Guntlet*-style tag-teaming.

Like *Diablo*, the dungeons and enemies are randomly generated, supplying a ton of replay value. The problem is that you may not be around long enough to appreciate the detailed locales. Though *Darkstone* is entertaining for a while, it starts to drag after a few hours. The novelty of *Diablo* was a large factor in its addictiveness. *Darkstone* leans too heavily on *Diablo*'s crutches. Spiffy graphics and cool voice acting can't elevate this beyond "imitator."

Rabid fans who just can't wait another day for *Diablo II* will find a

lot to like in *Darkstone*. And while this game is certainly beautiful to look at, the rest of you more patient souls are advised to keep the torch burning for just a few more months.

— DANIEL MORRIS is currently auctioning his soul on eBay

## GRAPHICS

Bright and appealing visuals, character models are all sharply different and interesting.

## SOUND

Excellent voice acting and solid sound effects throughout.

## DEPTH

A huge game, made bigger by randomized dungeons and enemies. Lots of replay value.

## DESIGN

Not terribly imaginative. Pulls all the traditional elements from action RPGs and adds little more.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Huge, randomized gameworld
- Attractive graphics
- Simple Interface

### Minuses

- Much-too-familiar approach to gameplay
- Combat is simplistic and gets boring quickly
- No sense of character involvement whatsoever

DEVELOPER	→ Microprose
PUBLISHER	→ Hasbro Interactive
REQUIRED	→ P333, 16MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, 200MB hard drive
IDEAL	→ P333, 32MB RAM

# Civilization II: Test of Time

This test receives a failing score

## ACCELE-RATED

It's not. Sorry. It's another non-accelerated game. Come on, this is *Civilization*, and you know it's not exactly a poly-pushing franchise.

## CIVILIZATION OVER



The signs are all around, and here are a few that point to the end of civilization



WOODSTOCK '99  
Gone but not ever expensive refreshments, burning, raping, and throwing tempos in the name of consumer advocacy



SLAY TRADERS  
Any traders, crazed by greed and aversion to the blathering their co-workers. But you wish socialism had succeeded, huh?



EGGER ENGAGED  
A woman consents to marry this psychotic, antisocial frug. Institution of marriage may never recover



New "dark" races provide tons of murky, unplayable maps for your gaming enjoyment.

**W**elcome to an almost pointless exercise. *Civilization II: Test of Time* exists largely because Microprose felt the need to spit out at least one *Civ* product after winning the right to do so in a long and vicious legal battle with Activision. The result of the lawsuit: Two crappy games, one from each company. That judge must feel like King Solomon, having ripped a baby in two to placcate two would-be mothers.

Luckily, Sid Meier and his Firaxis crew are now officially at work on *Civilization III* for Microprose. That's the product you should really be waiting for if you're interested enough in the *Civ* series to be reading this review. And I give you all this backstory because it's all far more interesting and relevant than *Test of Time*.

This slightly tweaked expansion of *Civ II: Multiplayer Gold* is hard to knock on gameplay grounds, because it all unfolds much as *Civ II* did. Fundamentally, this is a classic, addictive game. From the dawn of organized society, you have to guide successive generations of a fledgling civilization through technological advancement, moral and philosophical growth, the creation and mass distribution of drugs, and many military conflicts. As your empire expands, you press outward into



The denizens of Salmonville are, predictably, a bunch of yahoos.

space — and, in a twist unique to this game's campaign, eventually turn right back and come home to good ol' Earth.

To assuage the calls that this is only a slight enhancement of a several-year-old title, the designers have thrown in a few new loops. Gameplay now includes two "multi-levels" of expansion, one above and one below the traditional face of the Earth. So now you can develop your empire underwater and in the skies, or tunnel underground. This creates some interesting strategies like burrowing assaults, but in itself isn't worth the price of admission if you already own *Civ II*. A fantasy and science-fiction campaign lend some new threads to the experience, but they're yawns if you've seen the many SCN mods already available for *Civ II* (and, depressingly, incompatible with *Test of Time*).

The biggest problem with *Test of Time* is the woeful state of its graphics. It literally looks as if the game has made a step backward visually from the original *Civ II*. The sprites are harder to see, while the terrain is murkier and blotchier. The diplomatic interface screens look as dead as the ambassadors plying their trade. It all looks so old.

The essential gameplay is rock-solid, and makes a bad review of *Test of Time* a difficult proposition.

But there's not enough new in this package to warrant the price. And with *Civ III* on the horizon, it's best to just stick it out.

— DANIEL MORRIS is pretty uncivilized himself

## GRAPHICS

Darker and murkier than the originals; frankly, it just looks dated.

## SOUND

Expect the usual *Civ*-type scrapes and trumpets, otherwise nothing to get excited about.

## DEPTH

It's got the foundation of *Civ II*, making it a classic of deep strategy. But the addition of multi-dimensional levels doesn't add a whole lot.

## DESIGN

Just a few timid steps beyond the design document of *Civ II: Multiplayer Gold*. Buy *Multiplayer Gold* for 20 bucks less.

## RATING



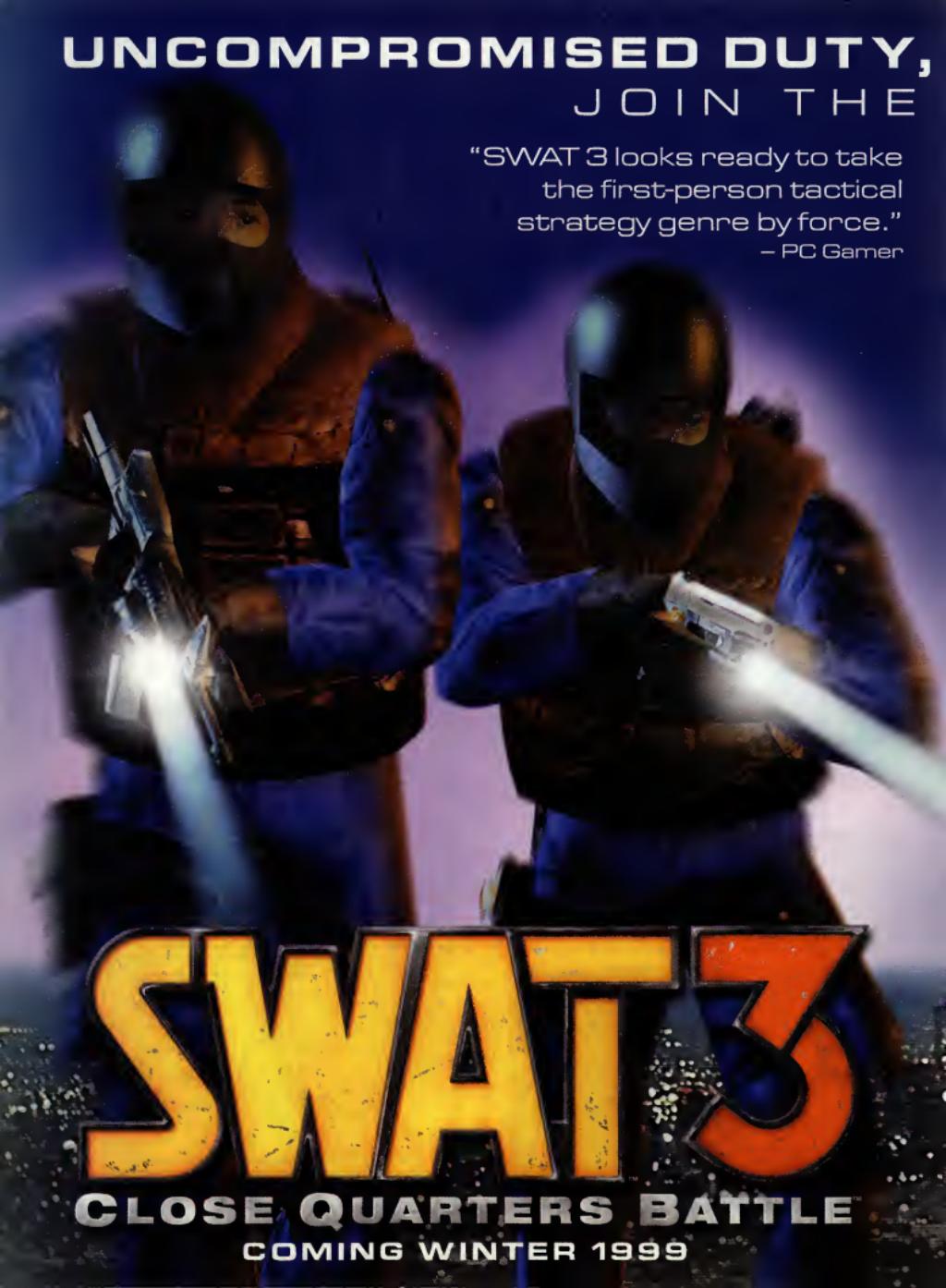
### Pluses

- Classic *Civ* gameplay
- New multi-level fields to conquer
- Fantasy and sci-fi campaigns

### Minuses

- Hasn't improved over *Civ II*
- Graphics have taken a step back
- *Civ III* is already on its way

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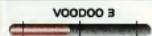
DEVELOPER	→ 3DO
PUBLISHER	→ 3DO
REQUIRED	→ P366, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard drive, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL	→ P360, 64MB RAM, D3D or Glide-compatible video card

# Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer

Kill Saddam. Need we say more?

## ACCELE-RATED

Evidently designed to run on lower-end systems, your 3DO hardware isn't going to get a major workout. While the explosions look great, the limited viewing distance before the horizon draws in is pretty bad.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D

## ASS WIPES

The print-ads for *Gulf War* feature a toilet stall (presumably in Iraq) with the U.S. flag being used for toilet paper. The true irony in this image is that real Middle Eastern toilet paper is much more abrasive than the nice cotton stuff we use here. While the patriotic types don't subscribe to this action, we do have suggestions for other arse-paper substitutions.

### BUSINESS FRM PAST JOBS/NOW-DEFUNCT GAMING MAGAZINES

They're a bit sharp, but they work in a pinch. Now-defunct gaming magazines also work quite nicely. We suggest PC computer game buyers works quite nicely as well.

### INSTRUCTION MANUALS

Fight sims are perfect, as their 100-page essays will last for years of reading and wiping pleasure.

### COMPUTER GAME BOXES

Ever wondered why they make 'em so big just to fit in a pre-wrapped CD jewel-case?

### GRASSY LAWNS

The dogs seem to have something here, getting down on your haunches and draggin' it through some well-groomed turf is really quite efficient. Note: It's a good idea to have a friend check for insects afterward. [Not before? — Ed.]

### CHER

We don't believe in life after love

### BIDET

Pronounced "Bidd-Day," these little devices are rare in the U.S., but an essential part of most European bathrooms. They squirt a little water jet around your bottom, and wash that brown right out of your hair.

### SADDAM HUSSEIN

Finally a terrorist operation he can really sink his teeth into

**S**adam Hussein — what a joker! Burning oil fields, giving UN weapons inspectors the run-around, invading countries ... This king of the practical joke always seems to be putting thousands of people in danger. But I'm sure if we asked him, he'd tell us that he didn't mean for anyone to get hurt, and crack us all up by saying that Kuwait was all a big misundertood "joke-y joke-y."

But, as it stands, our country just can't seem to understand Middle Eastern humor. So, we decided to kick Saddam's ass with Operation Desert Storm. The problem? He has an elusive ass, but one that's on the line in 3DO's *Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer*. Here you finally get the chance to bring the insane dictator (they don't actually use his name) to a fitting END (without leaving him BEHIND), using your extensive ARSENAL to get DIRECTLY to the BOTTOM. Enough ass, ya reckon?

*Operation Desert Hammer* appears to be a tank-sim at first. After a couple of seconds behind the mouse-and-keyboard first-person shooter style controls, you'll realize it's definitely an action game. Power through the first five levels and you may quickly dismiss it as too easy. But the first time you encounter a fleet of helicopters shooting guided missiles up your tailpipe, you'll find the game challenging enough to stall your progress for an hour or two.



"So Damn Insane" would be proud.



Is that an RV with a giant antenna? Nope, it's a friendly, neighborhood SCUD launcher.

You're at the helm of a prototype M12 tank nicknamed "The Hammer," and it starts every level with a full complement of ammunition. The power-ups replenish these, but you never acquire higher-level weapons. For that little extra "oomph," target an enemy and call in an airstrike to do the destruction for you.

As in 3DO's action-tank game for N64, you can choose to control the tank and turret independently or together. It's almost impossible to complete the later levels without this option selected, and it's a crucial technique in multiplayer. There are three "bosses," but once you have mastered your arsenal of weapons, you can quickly turn these end-level vehicles into convection ovens.

Eight players can square off in multiplayer deathmatch over the 18 single-player maps. Since the landscape is simplistic, the multiplayer game is fast, though not as complex as N64's *Battle Tanx*.

This game is by no means deep. Mission objectives sound complicated through voice-over military speak, but actually require little strategy. Still, all the tanks, helicopters, and missile launchers look and move like they should, and there is something satisfying about finishing a game without sacrificing your social life.

— JEFFREY ADAM YOUNG is adept at pooping in the woods

## GRAPHICS

Explosions are fantastic. Draw distance is often too short, though.

## DEPTH

About as deep as the kiddie pool.

## DESIGN

Looks like a sim, but acts like an action game.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Easy to get into
- Precise, simple controls
- Things blow up real good

### Minuses

- Too easy to win
- Only 18 levels
- Voice-over intro sounds like someone mocking a newsman, and doing it poorly

DEVELOPER	→ Sir-Tech
PUBLISHER	→ TaitoSoft
REQUIRED	→ P133, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL	→ P400, 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space, 8x CD-ROM

# Jagged Alliance 2

Think life is cheap? Try hiring these guys

## ACCELE-RATED

If you're looking for our patented fancy schmancy graphs here, you're going to be disappointed. JA2 requires a 32MB card and a 4x CD-ROM 16-bit card, which includes most 3D and non-3D display cards manufactured in the last few years. So that top line Voodoo nonsense isn't going to supply any boost to the speed or effects.

## MERCENARIES



Mercenaries are not the only people with a "mercenary attitude" for selling out.



LINDA TRIPP  
SOLD → Monica Lewinsky to Kenneth Starr  
RECEIVED → A severe beating with the ugly stick — plus much public scorn



PAUL REISER  
SOLD → Sigourney Weaver to the aliens  
RECEIVED → An effervescent hit in *Syndication* with Helen Hunt



JOHNNIE COCHRAN  
SOLD → The Justice system to O.J. Simpson  
RECEIVED → Book deal and appearance on "Oprah"



Bloodcats attack a group of mercs — a not uncommon situation in the homes of cat owners.

Several years ago, designer Ian Currie and Sir-Tech produced a cool tactical level, turn-based wargame called *Jagged Alliance*. The squad-based action format got a profile kick when Red Storm released *Rainbow Six*, which was essentially a realtime, first-person take on JA. Rather than jump on the ever-increasing bandwagon, *Jagged Alliance 2* remains true to its turn-based roots. Although there are some flaws, and it won't appeal to those whose strategic muscles were trained on *Command & Conquer* and the like, turn-based strategy aficionados will find plenty here to sink their teeth into.

JA2 casts you as the "brains" behind a team of mercenaries contracted by ousted President Enrico Chivaldori of Arulco to rid his homeland of his tyrannical wife Queen Deidranna. (Apparently the Queen is oppressing the citizens by making them watch "Ally McBeal" and "Oprah" until they beg for a firing squad.) Whatever the case, Enrico forwards you some initial cash to hire a mercenary team. Through various "websites" you'll hire mercs, buy weapons and ammo, and check out various sources of reconnaissance information before entering the strategic map of Arulco.

In combat, play switches to an isometric view where you use



A disgruntled freelance writer visits the PC Accelerator offices.

"action points" to give tactical movement and firing orders to the soldiers as they take on the Queen's forces. This is where the game really shines. Two levels of elevation let your soldiers climb up on roofs and pick off targets on the ground, all controlled with an effective interface.

The overall strategic element is also effective, requiring you to balance hiring and personalities of your troopers. This is where you select the sections of Arulco you wish to liberate — some contain valuable resources (such as mines) that give you needed income.

Graphically, the game is acceptable at best. Sadly, the blood and guts are minimal, and even sadder, options like exploding heads can be turned off. One of the game's problems is that weapon ranges and trooper skills are a little screwy. Soldiers with little pissant handguns occasionally overshoot expert marksmen with laser-sighted rifles. It's also tough to tell whether you're under cover or not.

On the other hand, the enemy AI is quite good — a bit too good. Enemy soldiers will use cover to hide from you, and will frequently pop out of open doors, take a shot, and vanish. Even on the lowest difficulty levels, this game is tough, and the level five end battle will generate howls of frustration.

Still, there's plenty of depth in *Jagged Alliance 2* for strategy fans. However, the highly disappointing omission of multiplayer makes JA2 a great game for single-player strategists only.

— ALLEN RAUSCH saw plenty of action during the '80s *Colo Wars*

## GRAPHICS

Simple, clean and quite 3D. The exploding heads are classic.

## SOUND

Some memorable voices are a bit cheesy, but overall well done.

## DEPTH

Plenty — there are a lot of complex strategic decisions to be made.

## DESIGN

The game is unforgiving to new players even at Novice level, otherwise, it's X-COM with mercs.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Excellent Web-style interface
- Extraordinary depth of strategy
- Long game

### Minuses

- Some cheesy voice-acting
- No multiplayer
- Problems with line-of-sight firing

Darkness falls over the city. Not the kind of darkness that comes with the absence of light, but rather the absence of good. And while many prepare to naively celebrate the new millennium, a small mysterious cult, known as "The Fallen", prepares to fulfill the dark promise of an evil prophecy. Yet, left standing between these "Fallen" ones is a rookie cop and a disillusioned ex-cop.



Good cop or ex-cop? The choice is yours as either the youthful, hand-to-hand combat super-sleuth, Officer D'Arci, or disgruntled, street-smart weapons expert, Roper McIntyre.



Explore and interact with anything and everything, as you carry out your objectives across 27 mission-based levels, within a 200 x 200 block cityscape.

# URBAN CHAOS



Part action, part adventure - all potentially lethal, as you platform your way through five distinct sections of the city.

Brutal street fighting awaits on the Union City streets, with intense hand-to-hand martial arts combat, vehicle chases and drive by shootings, and desperate automatic gun shootouts in dark alleys.

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# I SCORE . . .



**MORE OFTEN**

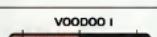
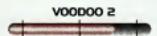
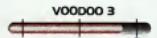
DEVELOPER	→ Iguana UK
PUBLISHER	→ Acclaim
REQUIRED	→ P200, 32MB RAM, 330MB hard drive, aX CD-ROM, Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator
IDEAL	→ PII 266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo3, Direct3D compatible sound card

# Shadow Man

Voodoo hoodoo that's not the usual Acclaim doodoo

## ACCELE-RATED

Most of *Shadow Man* is freakin' dark. Surprisingly (and ironically, given the game's subject matter), the Voodoo looks slightly better than the TNT, mostly because of the off-the-wall, hand-drawn look of the Voodoo chipset. In this case it actually helps you see what the hell is going on.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide



Look, in the lava ... it's a bonfire, it's a funeral pyre ... no, it's *Shadow Man*!

Superhero licenses have gotten royally reamed over the years and almost all the blame can be laid directly at the feet of our friends at Acclaim. But after unleashing the unholy trinity of *Spawn*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *Batman and Robin* for the PlayStation, Acclaim has finally come through with the goods.

Based on the *Shadow Man* book from Acclaim's own comic publishing wing, *Shadow Man* the game perfectly matches the comic's plot and mood. It follows the ongoing adventures of Mike Leroi, an English Lit grad resuscitated by voodoo sorceress Mama Nettle to become the *Shadow Man*, her personal otherworldly assassin and go-fer. (And they say no jobs exist for Liberal Arts majors anymore!) A prophetic dream of the coming apocalypse prompts Nettle to put *Shadow Man* on the case, lest an army of killers from Deadside (sort of a suburb of Hell) rise from the dead.

Part of the comic's charm is that *Shadow Man* is just a pawn, futilely attempting to control his own afterlife, but beholden to anyone waving a dead chicken and reeking of voodoo mojo. Never knowing exactly what's going on lends itself brilliantly to an adventure game, where most of the fun comes from making sense of a nonsensical world as you skip between the real world and the voodoo Deadside at will.

Graphically, the game resembles *Tomb Raider* due to its third-person perspective and unwavering



Jaunty (obviously named for his hat) is your Deadside advisor.

focus on its lead character's ass-cheeks, but provides a greater depth of exploration. Collecting dark souls of the damned raises *Shadow Man*'s power, letting you enter previously secured areas of Deadside, and eschewing the linear "level" system by revisiting old areas to find new secrets.

The combat system consists mostly of shooting projectiles via auto aim and evading anyone with a bigger gun than your own. Both Mike and *Shadow Man* start off with a simple hand gun, but find better weapons as the game progresses (a shotgun, submachine gun, the 0.9-SMG semi-automatic for Mike in the real world, and a host of flame and explosive weapons for *Shadow Man*), encouraging you to explore even further. Items like the Violator razorgun, journals, and an all-purpose engineer's key can be used in both worlds. But most of these weapons are specific to either Mike or *Shadow Man*. Enemies range from packs of graveyard dogs and swamp 'gators to tortured souls and serial killers, but death in either world is just a one-way ticket back to Deadside and a chance to start anew.

Acclaim's new 3D VISTA game engine is leaps and bounds beyond the craggy old *Tomb Raider* relic and, best of all, finally rids us of that pea-soup fog that plagued *Turok*. Supporting the dark atmosphere is a marvelous soundtrack oozing spooky mood.

So what's bad? Well, there's no freeloop feature (although there is

a sniper mode), so the camera moves to the side instead of above whenever blocked by a wall, making setting up jumps a real chore, while gunplay occasionally turns into monotonous finger-tapping. But you know what? It's still the best comic book game around. ▶

— CHUCK OSBORN strikes fear into the hearts of cowardly men by performing his mystical "Dance Of Wee-Wee"

## GRAPHICS

Dull textures, but it perfectly grabs the ambience of both Hell and Louisiana (Coincidence?). The best water effects this side of *Outcast*.

## SOUND

Just plain impressive. Even the voiceovers are appropriately melodic, yet surprisingly cheese-free.

## DEPTH

Caters to exploring, re-exploring, and then more exploring.

## DESIGN

Just linear enough to keep you going, but nonlinear enough to give the illusion of freedom.

## RATING



### Pluses

- A superhero license that works
- Lush graphics and rich sound
- Complex level design

### Minuses

- No freeloop
- Difficult to line up some jumps
- Gunplay gets repetitive

DEVELOPER	→ Micros
PUBLISHER	→ Micros
REQUIRED	→ P333, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 30MB hard drive
IDEAL	→ P200, 64MB, BX CD-ROM

# Corsairs

When Frogs meet for Grōg on the Captain's Log

## ACCELE-RATED

It really doesn't matter. Here, sprites be sprites, matey, yarrhh.



What would've been cool: A multiplayer pirate game where you race for the loot.



Did you know that "corsair" is another word for pirate ship?

**O**h, man — first they did a political-correctness groin job on Disneylands' *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, and now they let the French do a pirate-era RTS game — Sacre Merde!

Fact is, the entire cannon-balin' 'gang-plankin' 'Roger-jol-lyin' pirate thing has been largely neglected in the computer gaming world, almost as badly as the Old West (which may get its killer game if those slackers at Six Shooter Studios ever get their promising *High Noon* finished). *Corsairs* is a reasonably spirited attempt at a hybrid RTS/economic/exploration game, sporting heavy elements of all, but excelling at none. Playing from a grand overhead perspective, you assume the role of a French or British pirate captain out to make his fortune on the open seas, armed with a royal decree and a galleon filled with gold, spices, stout men, and can-noballs. Ahoy!

The four-stage interactive tutorial promises stylish period-piece graphics and music. The subject matter resonates in every last pixel of the interface — all yellowed parchment, rough script, and hewn woodwork — but the game structure begins to go soggy as it soaks in a virtual chum-bucket of clunky design, repetitive music, weak AI, and numerous lifeless options.

Though the individual missions in the single-player campaign have straightforward goals (broken down by instructions from local governors), you'll have a degree of freedom befitting a high-seas scalawag. In your quest to conquer the oceans, wreck enemy ships and accrue ill-gotten booty, there are numerous options. You trade spices and silks, recruit spies (to board enemy ships and provide intelligence), and build fleets and port structures (such as lighthouses to increase a port's visual range). You can also establish secret treasure islands (for gold storage and backwater bases of operation) and, of course, fight and board enemy vessels.

At sea, the gameplay is familiar click-and-send ... so familiar that the game begins to lose some of its period flavor. With the exception of a changing wind indicator, these tall ships might as well be light tanks, zipping around too quickly, too nimbly, too steriley. Minor adjustments to individual ships, such as sail deployment and types of cannons are presumably supposed to give a personality to each unit, but these tiny options distract you with an illusion of control, when in fact the minuta gets tiresome.

An action segment, whereby two ships ram and pirates begin boarding by gangplanks, loses the swashbuckling premise of clanging cutlasses and swinging grapnel assaults because of bottlenecked ship-deck arenas and slack-jawed, blithering AI, which finds most of your deckhands piling up idiotically at the ship-to-ship choke-points. It accomplishes little and turns into a bloodbath of men dying, largely ineffective one-man grapnel assaults and the pistol fire of your top officers, who should be elite combat units but somehow aren't.

*Corsairs* is an exciting RTS/adventure idea — a kind of "Command & Pillage," if you please. True pirate diehards who just can't take another minute of



This game is not an E-ticket.

*Shipwreckers!* may venture into these waters for a time, but be warned: Here be that serpents. And they kinda suck.

— As part of his plea bargain, CHRIS HUDAQ will be assigned *ane French game* per month until he gets his screenshots in an time

## GRAPHICS

The look is perfectly suited to the subject matter, with the tainted yellows of aging parchment serving as fog-of-war.

## SOUND

Rumor has it that pirates only had one type of music, and it was fleshy, repetitive, and bad. *Corsairs* recreates that perfectly.

## DEPTH

A sizeable array of options is available

(types of vessels, boarding combat), but too often they have a negligible effect on gameplay.

## DESIGN

*Corsairs* lurches admirably in several directions at once, stumbling in most of them.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Faithful look
- Realtime ship-to-ship boarding combat
- Err ...

### Minuses

- No multiplayer in an RTS — unforgiveable
- Miserable AI, particularly during boarding actions
- It's French

THE RACES ARE ALIGNING.  
THE ARMIES ARE GATHERING.  
THE APOCALYPSE IS APPROACHING.

AND PEACE IS CURLED UP IN THE FETAL POSITION, WHIMPERING.

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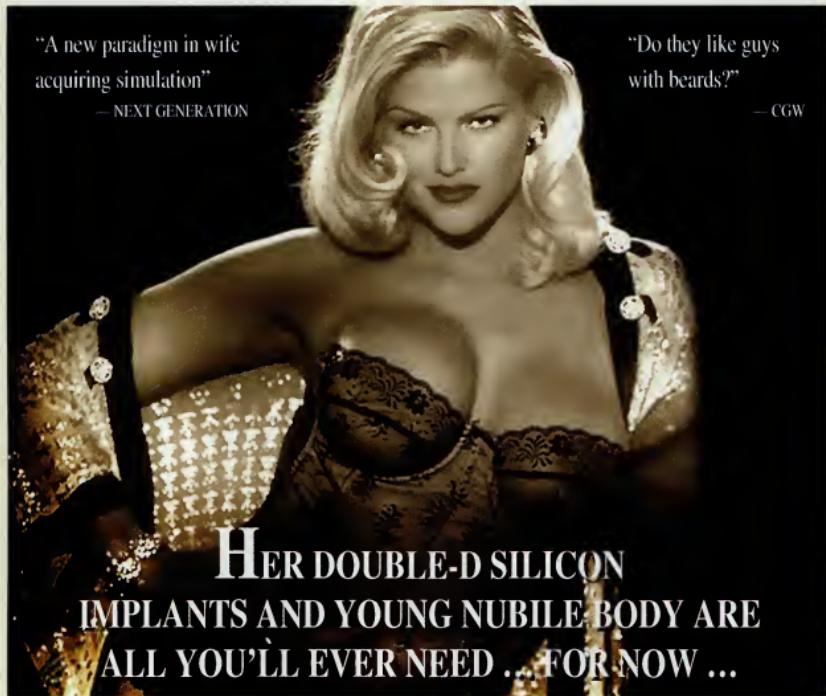


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# Football: New Rules, Just Right

Forget Australian Rules and Arena Football, Here comes New Rules Football

In honor of the NFL's new instant replay, and because the league's Head of Officiating has a pornographic name (Jerry Seeman), PCXL geniuses reverentially toward Canton, Ohio, and celebrates the start of a new football season with suggestions for ways to make the game even better. As any man worth his salt knows, football is currently the king of all sports, and deserves to remain so. With these new rules implemented, Vince Lombardi will grimace and shout from on high, and Sundays from September through December will surely remain the greatest days of our lives, despite what we tell our future wives (and future ex-wives).

## THE NEW RULES:



### RANDOM EXPLODING BALLS

**Why We Need It** →

This is America. Exploding anything makes sports better. Just look at how much the pitchers' mound made entirely of C-4 has livened up baseball. **Effect** → Will keep quarterbacks from holding onto the ball so long, and will keep receivers like Randy Moss with sure hands, from being so dominant — or ensure that they only have sure hand.

**Vince Lombardi Says** → "You'll put exploding balls in this sport over my cold, dead body! Oh, wait..."

### CHEERLEADER DRESS BASED ON PENALTIES

**Why We Need It** → In blowout games, crowds could cheer for penalties that would not only move teams back 5, 10, and 15 yards, but also force cheerleaders to remove parts of their clothing.

**Effect** → Naked cheerleaders — and fans with stuff painted on their privates

**Vince Lombardi Says** → "Nothing has done more to degrade NFL football in the past few years than increasingly naked cheerleaders — and the Detroit Lions."

### FAKE BALL

**Why We Need It** →

In any pile-up, the crowd can't really tell what's going on. Throw another ball onto the field without telling players which is real and which is fake. Hilarity ensues.

**Effect** → Players would chase both balls until they could discover the real one, which could only be uncovered by chewing all the way through the ball. The one with the creamy nougat center is real. **Vince Lombardi Says** → "Mmmmm... creamy nougat"



Vince Lombardi, "Everyone's Grandpa"



### ROBOT REFEREES

**Why We Need It** →

Robots never make horrible pass interference calls — and they look cool.

**Effect** → Games look much more like that cool *Cyberball* video game, and annoying players like Deion Sanders will be instantly shot in face by Ref-O-Matic 2000.

**Vince Lombardi Says** → "With my recent investment in Duracell, robot referees will make me rich. Rich, I tells ya!"

### RACE THE CHAIN GANG

**Why We Need It** → These guys take too long. If players can run to the first down marker faster than the chain gang, the team automatically gets a first down.

**Effect** → Lots of flattened chain gang guys, more excitement, and thank God, a much faster game.

**Vince Lombardi Says** → "First downs are for sissies. Score every time you get the ball within four plays, or go back to watching 'Party of Five,' you woman!"



## 5 FAMOUS GAMES

### MATTEL FOOTBALL

**HISTORY** → One of the first hand-held electronic games when it hit the market in 1976, this classic depicted players as red dashes and made you cross the screen so times for a touchdown.

**NOTORIETY** → Got people hooked on sports games and ruined thousands of kids' eyesight for life.

**LEGACY** → Sierra's *NFL Football Pro 99* used the same rendering engine.



### INTELLIVISION FOOTBALL

**HISTORY** → The first game to make us see the real possibilities of video game football, with reference to the Atari 2600's three-midgets-to-a-slide flickerfest.

**NOTORIETY** → This baby was pimped by George Plimpton for having more realistic graphics than the Atari. Of course, most washing machines could produce better graphics than the Atari.

**LEGACY** → With the Intellivision keypad, showed that more plays were possible than "Run Left" and "Pass Deep."

### SPORTS TALK FOOTBALL

**HISTORY** → A Genesis classic, and one of the initial sports titles to experiment with speech.

**NOTORIETY** → Used Al Michaels for sparse, robotic commentary like "It's raining on the field..."

**LEGACY** → A terrible one, if you listen to all the moronic game commentary/commentators we're stuck with now.

### MADDEN 96

**HISTORY** → Was to be the first PS Madden title in 1995, and was touted as the next big thing in sports gaming.

**NOTORIETY** → Abruptly canceled after EA's development team supposedly saw sped-up footage of Sony's *Gameday* in a TV commercial.

**LEGACY** → Everyone wants to know if it was really that bad. We've seen it, so trust us when we tell you that EA made the right decision.

### ATARI FOOTBALL

**HISTORY** → Released to arcades in late 1978, this trackball classic

was one of the first true sports video games.

**NOTORIETY** → Kept us in arcades for hours, and pinched millions of fingers

when players tried to run their Xs or Os faster than humanly possible.

**LEGACY** → Hardly any sports games since have used finger-crushing trackballs.



The Real American Team

## PLAY BY PLAY

DEVELOPER → Gonzo Games

PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM, 65MB

hard drive, brain damage

IDEAL → PII 233, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx card, nearby trash can for handy disposal

### ACCELE-RATED

A 3D card is recommended, though the only thing it appears to do is to make the crap-tacular graphics on your screen, that's remain in a window — now that's technology.



You can try to kill yourself on buildings, but your character clips through them — another fine *Skydive!* feature.

DEVELOPER → Lankhor (really)

PUBLISHER → Eidos

REQUIRED → P466, 32MB RAM, 6MB hard

drive, 2MB Direct3D video card, 4x CD-ROM

IDEAL → PIII 466, 64MB RAM, 60MB hard

drive, Glide or 3D video card, 33.6 modem

### ACCELE-RATED

Not short of a few tech problems, *F1* refused to recognize a Wicked3D Voodoo2. Even when tested on a TNT2, the graphics failed to shine. Smooth textures and a steady framerate were apparent, even though the software mode was quite acceptable.

**D**espite it's "official" status, allowing the developers to incorporate all the drivers and teams that competed in the 1998 Formula One racing season, it's impossible to get past this latest *F1* racing entry's lack of polish. Microprose's *F1GP2* has stood the test of time as the pinnacle sim for this most European of racing formats. UbiSoft's *Formula One* was incredibly well designed, but failed to set alight the mass fan base that faithfully tunes into this sport every two weeks throughout the season.

A little spit and polish would have eradicated some of the technical issues with the game (such as failing to recognize video and sound cards, and not allowing

## Skydive!

### Don't open your chute, it's not worth living through

**L**ook at the *Skydive!* package and you won't find the Electronic Arts name anywhere, though this abomination was developed, produced, and published by an EA label. As gamers, we've come to expect a lot from EA, so it's hard to fathom a "game" this horrific from them. But strange days like these, when every company is rushing to set up a budget label, beget strange products.

EA's entry is the Gonzo Games brand, and *Skydive!* is its first effort. The game lets you pick between two skydivers, distinguished only by their jumpstarts. Choose from six locations around the world, then pick your event. Free falling has jumpers doing tricks for points, while accuracy asks that you land on a target. Sky

slalom means you must navigate a series of hoops in the sky to score points. Yoo-hoo!

Click to start and the falling begins — just don't assume that this is where the excitement comes in. Control is nothing more than moving the mouse left and right to alter the laughably "animatized" lean of your diver, then pushing the left or right mouse button to flip or dive faster. The graphics are fuzzy, becoming more pixelated as you near the ground. Push the space bar and your chute opens for a perfect landing — every time.

*Skydive!* is one of the worst products we've ever seen. We're shivering just thinking about their next exclamation point title. If this is any sign of EA's budget line, *Deer Hunter* will seem like a five-star masterpiece in no time.

### GRAPHICS

An insult to art and artists around the world.

### SOUND

The rush of wind, random shouts of "Yoo-hoo!" and horrible music.

### CONTROL

Move the mouse left and right. Push the left and right mouse button. You've now mastered *Skydive!*

### REALISM

Assuming skydiving is only as complicated as navigating a WordPad menu, realism is spot on.

### RATING

#### Pluses

- Umm ...
- Well ...
- Forget it, this is too hard

#### Minuses

- Hideous graphics
- Awful controls
- The biggest waste of \$20 ever

## Official Formula One Racing

### Officially mediocre

them to be selected manually). At its heart, *Formula One Racing* is a hardcore sport sim. While it trounces the mundane nature of Indy racing's bland oval courses, there still isn't much in the way of overtaking or nail-biting finishes after over two hours of brutal racing. So flavor needs to be added, even artificially, to make these rac-

ing games come alive. This game doesn't do that.

Three levels of difficulty allow newcomers to get a feel for *F1*, and the physics engine on the toughest level is as challenging as it should be. All the usual driving aids are available to help (though no racing line, which is an oversight). Possibly its strongest facet is the Internet



This is about as good as it looks in *Official Formula One Racing*, a game with graphics so dated, we started craving Crystal Pepsi.

multiplayer support. Through Mplayer, eight people can race, although the online competition is pretty stiff, and you'll need to be familiar with the nuances of all 16 tracks. For the hardcore *F1* fan, this is the biggest (and perhaps only) selling point.

### GRAPHICS

Disappointing cars and effects (awful smoke from burning rubber tires), though there's no draw-in.

### SOUND

Irritating engine squeals and limited, virtually useless commentary.

### CONTROL

Tight with most wheels, though no force feedback support.

### REALISM

Bonus points for the most up-to-date driver and team information of any *F1* game.

### RATING

#### Pluses

- Mplayer Internet support
- Decent level of customization
- The most recent drivers

#### Minuses

- Clunky on-screen info
- No polished introduction to *F1*
- Dated graphics

**DEVELOPER** → Dynamix  
**PUBLISHER** → Sierra Sports  
**REQUIRED** → P566 (with 3D), P200  
 (without 3D), 32MB RAM, Insatiable  
 craving for boredom  
**IDEAL** → PII 233, 64MB RAM, 3D  
 card, basement worm farm

## ACCELE-RATED

The game supports Glide and Direct3D, though we're guessing that, with all due respect to Angle, the vast majority of this game's buyers will know what these terms actually mean.



Fish must be smarter than  
morons who play this game.



There's something "crappie"  
going on here.



TB3D offers several different (but still boring) casting views.

# Trophy Bass 3D

Virtual boats, virtual lakes, virtual fish ... virtually action-less

**I**t's almost too easy to roast fishing and hunting games these days, with so many of them cluttering the shelves and displays of our local Wal-Marts and software stores, and with so many not even achieving Ass level. Yes, these whipping boys of the software world are awful, and yes, they contain hardly a kernel of fun, but if we look at them from the fishing enthusiast perspective, we might see the enjoyment, we might see the attraction.

And this magazine also might be named *PC Gamer*.

Assuming all those things will happen when the severed head of Jason Bateman is elected governor of Minnesota (can it be far behind Gov. Ventura?), we still must judge a game on its graphics and gameplay, its action and feeling — on its level of entertainment. And despite all the noble efforts of Dynamix and Sierra Sports to craft *Field & Stream Trophy Bass 3D*, it still lacks sorely in the fun-o-meter.

Give them credit though. This 360MB install is as detailed a licensed fishing sim as we've seen, with several different real world lakes to choose — from Florida's Lake Okeechobee to Vermont's Lake Champlain — and a variety of modes to play. From a relaxing one-man fishing trip to a tournament mode in which you must catch the highest collective weight, everything a real angler could want is here. There's even the ability to head into your virtual tackle box to change your cast, lure, line, rod, and reel with brand name stuff from Berkley, Abu Garcia, or Excalibur among others if you're brave enough — or bored enough.

Though options abound, graphic twinkles do not. The game uses 3D



Casting is the second most exciting thing *Trophy Bass 3D* offers for players. The first? The uninstall option on the game's menu.

acceleration through Glide and Direct 3D, and while the motion-captured fisherman looks good, the water and natural surroundings are mostly unimpressive. After casting, you see the underwater world through the "LureCam." Bug-eyed fish are adequately drawn, but getting close to seaweed reveals disturbing amounts of pixelation. Sound is about as stark as in real fishing with occasional water plops, but the *Smokey and the Bandit*-style chase music that explodes from your speakers whenever a fish bites at least wakes you up.

The game's controls for reeling are fairly well executed, with a nice balance of challenge and ease. But our first few attempts at catching bass resulted in broken lines, a fish the game made us throw back, and a 9 oz. crappie, which we thought would be an excellent alternative title for this game.

Despite all the attempts to snare every last fishing detail, it still doesn't feel like there's anything enjoyable to do. And worse, you never feel compelled to try different lakes or new modes, simply because the third expedition is remarkably like the first and the second — interesting until you catch a fish, then about as likely to keep your attention as anything on the History Channel.

The game provides help for the uninitiated angler, with video tips from four bass pros, including B.A.S.S. Classic Champion Denny

Brauer. And for the sake of longevity, [WON.net](http://www.WON.net) provides multiplayer support. It's a thoughtful addition, though every time we tried to log on and frag, er, we mean, fish against someone, we couldn't find a competitor. Perhaps the owners of this game were all out enjoying real fishing in the great outdoors. Despite this game's depth and detail, we can't find fault with that idea.

## GRAPHICS

Mostly unimpressive, despite the support of 3D acceleration.

## SOUND

Hardly noticeable, except for the fish-catching music and the annoying background country tunes.

## CONTROL

Solid controls for reeling in fish, a little unintuitive for new players.

## REALISM

Excellent for fisherman, probably a little baffling for those not familiar with the sport.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Some excellent 3D graphics
- Several different lake options
- Very detailed options for rods, lures, and casts

### Minuses

- Just as boring as a badly produced fishing game
- Slightly steep learning curve
- No free bait coupons included

## PLAY BY PLAY

DEVELOPER → Microsoft  
PUBLISHER → Microsoft  
REQUIRED → P400, 32MB RAM, no  
desire for depth or statistics  
IDEAL → PII 400, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx  
card, joystick, friends who don't mind  
crowding around your PC screen

## ACCELE-RATED

Though there is a software mode, don't bother. The game's Direct 3D keeps framers rates for the in-game graphics consistently high.

## MADDEN: FIRST LOOK

After 989 Sports decided not to bring *Gameday* to the PC this year, the competitors for the football crown are down to just EA's *Madden 2000* and Microsoft's *NFL Fever 2000* — and *Fever* is an excellent playing game. Though *Madden* isn't quite ready for review yet, we took a sneak peak at an early version of the game to see which game will be worth buying this pigskin season. Some early thoughts...

**GRAPHICS** → *Madden* graphics improve each year, and the 2000 version is no exception. Players look more rounded and realistic, while height and weight variations between slight running backs and beefy linemen are well rendered. New tackling animations convey a strong sense of realistic collisions, and on fast systems, overall framers look faster than last year, too.

**SOUNDS** → Play-by-play seems slightly closer to the action, and a new third announcer for game introductions and half-time makes the game's broadcast style more realistic. After play starts now include sounds as well, with players talking trash after big plays.

**NEW FEATURES** → *Madden* has added a few new twists to the same old formula. A situation mode will let you jump into the critical point of famous historic games — could you match John Elway's feat and lead the Broncos to a game-winning drive for the AFC Championship in Cleveland? Also new to this genre is the *Madden Challenge*, a set of goals (completing a certain number of passes over 30 yards, for example) that will let players unlock codes within the game.

**CONCERN** → For players with older systems, this game can be a beast. Though the game isn't optimized yet, it did chug slightly on a PII 266 with details turned down. And though the game's graphics have been bumped up, we worry that the only reason to buy the 2K version will be the updated rosters. We hope not.

# Microsoft NFL Fever 2000

The best playing football game \$20 can buy, except ...

There's a reason every bona fide PC sports game aficionado has at least one gamepad dangling from their computer. Most of us occasionally want to dive into a football game the way our console brethren can — either for the visceral feel of a perfectly-executed post pattern for a long touchdown pass, or to bask in the pure thrill of smashing our buddy into the turf with a chest-shattering tackle.

But there's a reason we paid \$2,000+ for our P400s and haughty 3D cards, and a reason we keep a keyboard and mouse as our sports game companions rather than the couch and living room TV. We also want our statistics and trades, our multi-year franchises, and season number printouts. We want depth. We want to have our football-shaped cake and eat it, too.

That's what makes *Microsoft NFL Fever 2000*, the Big M's first entry into PC football, so good and so bad at the same time. The crisp graphics, detailed player models, and blazing framers are the best we've seen by far. The game-play is spectacular, the animations are superb, and the controls are as good as a console football game (this is a good thing for those who have never experienced a good console football game).

But (and there always seems to be a "but!"), Microsoft decided not to include statistical tracking — at all! Why, oh why would they do this? According to a Microsoft spokesperson, on this, their first football game, they focused on the play and the engine. Next year they will implement other features like stats. Well thanks for letting us beta test your product, Bill. It's just like we've been doing with Windows for years — maddening.

There is also no LAN or Internet multiplayer option, which essentially means that *NFL Fever* is nothing more than a great-playing console football game, but lacking any reason to play a season or any way to play with a friend in the Arizona State Penitentiary.



Varying player sizes make for nasty collisions, as this running back is introduced to the turf by a burly defenseman.

*Fever*'s gorgeous graphics and impressive array of visuals (which come very close to the look of early builds of *Madden 2000*) are just a tease for a game that never really scores. The graphics and controls can't carry the rock without blockers, and the rest of the game seems to be stepping off the field just as that tandem is ready to score. Sound is spotty at best, with good tackling and player sounds, but lackluster crowds and jittery play-by-play commentary. Microsoft shelled out the cash to get Dick Stockton and Matt Millen, but failed to hone the sound code. It ended up sounding like Mel Tillis and Elmer Fudd calling the game.

Even worse, when you tire of the admittedly exceptional slash-and-dash action, there's nothing left. The few management options (creating and trading players, reorganizing rosters) are bare-bones, and we've seen them in a dozen previous games. Trading or free agent signing is nothing more than swapping player for player, with no AI to nix ludicrous trades (like your entire team for Ricky Williams — come to think of it, the Saints could use this feature).

Neither is there a franchise mode to keep you interested for more than one season. Outside of the superb gameplay, the only notable bright spot is the game's playbook manager, which offers a fairly easy-to-use play editor to create your own plays.

*Fever* is the best multiplayer football game on the PC today, and well worth the \$20 price tag. With two gamepads and a friend sitting at your PC, the gameplay is better than *Madden* in almost every way, but a football game without stats is a criminal offense which cannot be forgiven.

Oh well, maybe next year.

## GRAPHICS

Terrific in-game graphics, detailed players, and realistic stadiums.

## SOUND

Soild sounds, but lackluster crowd response and stuttering commentary.

## CONTROL

Tight controls and relatively easy-to-learn moves, but only if you're using an eight-button controller.

## REALISM

Single-player is too easy to be realistic, but the multiplayer games are amazingly addictive and real.

## RATING



### Pluses

- Excellent framerate, even on slow machines
- Great in-game graphics and details
- The best playing football game

### Minuses

- Zero depth
- Zero stats
- Little adherence to the rules of real-world football

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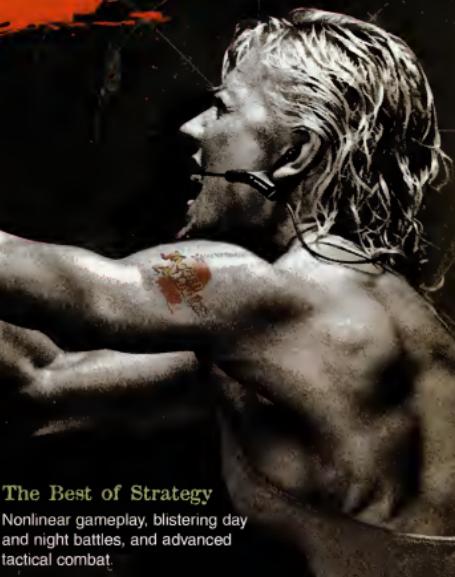


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# HALF-LIFE MOD EXPO '99

Games were played, liquor was consumed, shit was talked, and "Scoops" made his patented inside moves — that's about all we can remember (or are willing to say)

**T**he staff of PCXL is always eager and willing to attend industry parties — after all, who can resist the lure of free food and alcohol? Not us, that's for damn sure. Usually these events consist of PR reps doing their best to make us look at their games while we do our best to ignore the games and guzzle liquor as if prohibition were mere seconds away.

On July 29, however, Sierra, Valve, and [WON.net](http://www.WON.net) hosted a party at Club-i in San Francisco that was pretty damn unique. It focused on *Half-Life* mods, and in an effort to make sure that much of this beta software was shown in its best possible light, Sierra flew in the creators.

So what prompted this party? According to Harry Teasley of Valve, it's pretty simple. "Valve has benefited tremendously from the mod community, and this is our way of giving something back. Not only does Valve have its roots in the mod community (they bought mod makers Team Fortress



Counterstrike lets you upgrade your weapons.

Software and several staff members came up from the minors), but the mods really add legs to our product and extend the game's life."

In addition to this expo, Valve is helping bedroom industry developers with technical support, a more detailed SDK (software developer kit) that gives folks complete access to the guts of *Half-Life*, and by patching *Half-Life* to make mods easier to install and play. Valve is also letting mod authors do the unthinkable: Make money from their creations.

"We're allowing the mod teams to sell their mods for money," Teasley revealed. "They can sell them via their website, or however they see fit. In another first, we're even allowing them to make and sell mod-themed items like hats and t-shirts." (For those of you with your heads up your collective asses, that means you could be buying Counterstrike hats, t-shirts, condoms, and bumper stickers.) According to Teasley, mod authors who are doing professional-quality work should be able to profit from their creations.

And selling mods isn't the only way these hard-working folks can make money. *PC Gamer* has hired Neil Manke several times to make levels (USS Darkstar), and [WON.net](http://www.WON.net) sponsored the creation of Action Half-Life. So, if you can prove you've got the talent to create high quality stuff, there is money to be made out there.

It was great meeting the guys behind these mods. Not only were they excited to be there, but they also took their projects very seriously. Universally they discussed their mods like any "normal" game developer. Unfortunately, they did show how green they are in one regard — not a one of them was drinking. So disappointing ....

## FEATURED MODS

### COUNTERSTRIKE

**DEVELOPED BY** → Minh Le, Viper-X, Leon, and Sidewinder  
**WEBSITE** → <http://www.planethalf-life.com/counterstrike>

**WHAT IS IT** → A team-based mod, players are divided between two teams — the terrorists and the counter-terrorists (with some unfortunate scientists caught in the middle). Players earn money for various tasks (killing members of the other team or rescuing hostages), which is then used to buy better weapons.



**DEVELOPER'S COMMENT** → Unfortunately, the guys behind Counterstrike were unable to attend the event. There was some guy showing the mod, but since he didn't seem like he knew what was really going on, we went back to the bar.

**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → The second public beta is available, and the team is hard at work on several changes and improvements. Watch their website for details.



### ACTION HALF-LIFE

**DEVELOPED BY** → The A-Team  
**WEBSITE** → <http://www.WON.net/game-rooms/action/half-life/>

**WHAT IS IT** → The follow-up to the popular Action Quake. Seeking to emulate action movies, players use real-world weapons, must reload, and one head shot will kill you. It's fast and brutal.

**DEVELOPER'S COMMENT** → I asked the A-Team's Demi Lee Scott what was new about this version of Action. "We've added wall penetration, new animations, and textures, and limb specific damage."

When asked why he spends his life making mods, he simply replied: "Because we love it."

**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → Action Half-Life has been released, so what the hell are you waiting for? You can download it from [www.WON.net](http://www.WON.net)





### USS DARKSTAR

DEVELOPED BY → Neil Manke, Elinar Saukas, Magnus Jansen, and Paul Taylor for PC Gamer  
WEBSITE → <http://www.planethalf-life.com/manke>



### SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

DEVELOPED BY → Peter Ginsberg and Kevin Cancienne  
WEBSITE → <http://www.planethalf-life.com/si/>

**WHAT IS IT** → You and your teammates are security officers for one of two rival corporations. Your job? Acquire and protect your company's most valuable human resource — scientists. The more scientists you have, the faster you research new weapons.



**WHAT IS IT** → Set in the year 2066, Gordon Freeman is a scientist aboard the USS Darkstar, a zoological science ship. Things go horribly awry on board and players must then battle through 16 single-player levels.

**DEVELOPER'S COMMENT** → "I am PC Gamer's evil minion."  
**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → USS Darkstar is available from PC Gamer's website and is on the PCXL CD.



### GUNMAN

DEVELOPED BY → Rewolf  
WEBSITE → <http://gunman.telefragged.com/>

**WHAT IS IT** → Gunman, while using the *Half-Life* engine, is a completely new single-player game, and is not set in the *Half-Life* universe. The action takes place on five distant planets, and Gunman will let you do all sorts of crazy stuff, like configure your weapons and drive vehicles.



**DEVELOPER'S COMMENT** → Herb Flower filled us in on the team's post-Gunman plans. "Hopefully we can stay together and work as a team on new, professional projects. We'd really like to do this professionally, and we all view this [Gunman] as our resume."

**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → Rewolf, the name for the team working on Gunman, are shooting to have this 200MB behemoth done this fall. Watch their website for updates.



### DEVELOPER'S COMMENT

"That's my beer, give it back! No, wait! Ouch!" [So at least one mod-maker was drinking — Ed]

**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → The first beta for this mod has just been released. You can snag it from their website.



### CHEMICAL EXISTENCE

DEVELOPED BY → Red Genesis Entertainment  
WEBSITE → <http://www.redgenesis.com/>

**WHAT IS IT** → Players assume the role of Reece Max, a man who accidentally gets caught in the

middle of a gang war being funded by an evil corporation. As if that wasn't bad enough, this same evil corporation is creating a race of evil mutants. Chemical Existence will feature new weapons, enemies, and will also include new multiplayer games.

**DEVELOPER'S COMMENT** → Unfortunately, the boys behind CE were experiencing technical problems. And while what they had to say was rather interesting, none of it was fit to reprint here.

**WHEN CAN I PLAY IT** → CE should be released later this year.



## MAKING MODS — A PRIMER

**W**e were pretty damned surprised when Valve told us they were letting mod makers sell their creations. Not only is this a bold step that could forever change the mod landscape, it also applies added pressure to mod makers: If they want to sell their mod, it's going to have to be every bit as good as any other retail product. (Head Games notwithstanding.)

With that in mind, we applied the "Is it worth any money" test to Counterstrike, which is currently one of the most popular mods for Half-Life. As a free product it's great, but is it worth 10 or 20 bucks? Not quite. (And while we use Counterstrike as an example, the issues we bring up really apply to all mods.)

### COUNTERSTRIKE ISSUES

**PROBLEM** → In its current form, there is zero incentive for the counter-terrorists to rescue any of the hostages. Sure, you get money for doing it, but no one ever does it — most games just turn into team deathmatch.

**SOLUTION** → Always design the mod around your core idea — just like "real" game developers, you must think about gameplay. If you want to have a terrorist/counter-

terrorist/hostage scenario, the mod must be designed to facilitate that idea. In this case, there is absolutely no incentive for the counter-terrorists to free the hostages. A possible solution is to reduce the amount of money they get for killing the terrorists and jack up the amount they get for freeing hostages.

Also, think about different ways the game can unfold. While it's fun to have the terrorists guard the hostages when the counter-terrorists charge in, don't be afraid to mix things up. Perhaps the counter-terrorists could start with the hostages and must escort them across the map (a la TFC's Hunted), or the hostages could begin on the far side of the map and both sides must race to them — the terrorists to execute them, the counter-terrorists to guard them.

Map design also plays a role in this area. The maps should always be designed around the mod concept and should be balanced so that all teams have an equal chance. Additionally, they should be designed so that every inch of the map serves a purpose — if



there are large areas that go unused, the map should be scrapped and redesigned.

**PROBLEM** → The models are too similar — both sides look exactly the same, with the only exception being the terrorists wearing short-sleeved shirts. (Which means that in a dark area, it's impossible to tell who's who.)

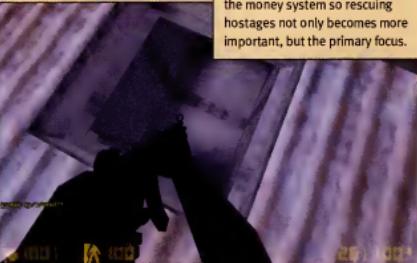
**SOLUTION** → The team working on Counterstrike is creating new, more distinct models, but they should have included them in the initial release. Always create models that make the different teams easy to distinguish.

**PROBLEM** → Beta releases.

**SOLUTION** → Since you don't

have to worry about larger issues like network code, don't release the mod until it's pretty complete. When you decide it's time to release your mod, make sure the gameplay is as good as you can get it — this will let users send you feedback to help you further tweak it. (On the flipside, if there's no gameplay, how are people going to suggest improvements?) It's a great feeling to release something after months of hard work, but don't jump the gun.

**IN SUMMARY** → The hardworking folks behind Counterstrike have done some great work — the coding for buying weapons is solid, and they've quickly patched any problems (like cheating) that have sprung up. Now they just need to hunker down and polish this sucker. Create some levels that force people to play the mod the way it was intended, and tweak the money system so rescuing hostages not only becomes more important, but the primary focus.



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# FANTASY QUAKE – Frags and Shags?

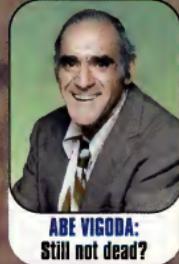
# Xtratainment WEEKLY

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## Hot Fall Preview!

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ABE VIGODA:  
Still not dead?



JERRY LEWIS: Proof the  
French are insane?



POKEMON:  
Embodiment of evil?

## Remember Unreal?

**I**t seems like only yesterday that gamers and game journalists the world over were hailing the *Unreal* engine as the altogether too corny "next big thing." Hamstrung by laughable Internet play, the engine still coined in the licensing fees from the likes of Legend Entertainment (*Wheel of Time*), ACS Games (*Werewolf*), Yosemite (*Navy SEALS*), and most famously by 3D Realms, who ditched the *Quake II* engine in favor of Epic Games' hot rookie for *Duke Nukem* forever.

And what's happened since? The only games to come out boasting *Unreal* engine-powered gameplay were the woeful *Klingon Honor Guard*, the embarrassing *TNN Sports Pro Hunter*, and... well, that's about it. Thus far, the Build engine has produced better games than the highly touted



Legend's added a true particle system, weather effects, and decals to the vanilla *Unreal* engine.

*Unreal* engine. So what happened? The Internet code got infinitely more stable after the .22a release and the *Unreal* community mod makers cranked heavily on their projects, with TFC, Manhunt, and other amateur additions giving longevity to a product whose future seemed assured. How come



the professional developers have taken their time? Of the aforementioned games, *Navy SEALS* tragically bit the dust with Yosemite's demise when parent company Sierra reorganized. However, it appears that *Werewolf* is still on course for its late October release.

Not surprisingly, 3D Realms doesn't want to comment. Despite having stated that the change to the *Unreal* engine would only delay *Duke Nukem* forever by a few weeks, either the company's intentions for the game raised considerably, or there have been more issues to overcome than expected. Rumors of them ditching *Unreal* to revert to the *Quake III* engine cannot be confirmed (or were started here in PCXL).

With *Unreal Tournament* near completion, the engine might soon be back in the spotlight. Id Software continually pushes the *Unreal* posse and that's a good thing for gamers. Given that *Klingon* was the first game out of the gate sporting the *Unreal* engine, let's hope that *Star Trek Voyager* doesn't suffer the same level of rushed craptitude that plagued Microprose's effort. With EA backing the *QIII* engine in next year's American McGee's *Alice* and the worst-kept-secret-in-the-industry James Bond game, it seems that the balancing of licensing power is shifting back to Mesquite, TX.

### GAME

### STATUS

Unreal Tournament	Close, but continually delayed
Duke Nukem Forever	When it's done is now a question not a statement
<b>Navy SEALS</b>	Cancelled
Klingon Honor Guard	Released — and sucked ass
Nerf Arena Blast	On schedule — to suck ass
TNN Pro Hunter	Released and won suicide award
Wheel of Time	Delays and doubts but latest screens look great
Desu Ex	Ion Storm name based on the <i>Unreal</i> engine — 2 strikes
Werewolf 2	EA's new game
Werewolf	On schedule (checkered)
Hired Guns	Planned for Q4 2000
X-COM Alliance	Missing in Action
Core of Tragedy	A true classic — for a shoddily designed DM Map, that is

## FANTASY FRAG

### POKÉMON

**WHY WE HATE IT** → Pikachu and the other sickly-sweet characters that inhabit the suck-ulant

*Pokémon* phenomenon are taking over the world. The horrible disease *Pokémonia* has already claimed the lives of millions in Japan, and now it's taking over the U.S. of A. with mutant offspring like *Pokémon Pinball* and *Pokémon Snap*. They've even launched a money-sucking recruiting spree, where thousands of inbred geeks spend piles of their parents' cash to have their picture taken with a piece of foam. Forget Tinkly-Winkly, the bastards behind *Pokémon* will stop at nothing to ensure the success of their plan for world domination.



**HOW IT SHOULD BE FRAGGED** → Just so you know, we do realize that Electrode, Diglett, and "da rest a da bitches" are not real. It's the creators and money-hungry Poképrick corporate types we're after. They should be stoned by real gamers with the cheap, crappy Gameboys on which *Pokémon* and its retard spawn were birthed. It would be far more fun (and creative) than any game they've ever come up with.

Every weekday on our website we frag whatever the heck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on [www.pcxl.com](http://www.pcxl.com). You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the **CRAZY NEWS AND BABES**.

### THE POWER METER

As the race for the top holiday titles heats up, some familiar faces are looming ominously over the chart, armed with high profile names.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	LAST YEAR
1 3		HASBRO → Still riding high on <i>Myths</i> , and rumors circulate that they're about to acquire GT, which will add <i>Duke Nukem Forever</i> , among others, to their stable.
2 4		SIERRA → The <i>Hoff Life</i> franchise continues to dominate gamer interest, with an add-on, mods, and <i>T2</i> looming. <i>Homeworld</i> doesn't look too bad, either.
3 7		<b>ACTION/ADVENTURE</b> → Getting back in the groove with both <i>Bottlehead 2</i> and <i>Dark Reign</i> among their high-profile fall line-up. <i>Soldier of Fortune</i> looks simply amazing.
4 5		<b>INTERPLAY</b> → Flushed with cash (and many employees) from the <i>Titus</i> buyout, this sleeping giant has plenty of impressive games coming, including <i>Franchise 2</i> , <i>EA</i> → Their sports license dominates, with <i>WFA</i> adding the <i>MLS</i> to its 2000 iteration and a slew of <i>Tiger</i> golf games. <i>Quake III</i> -based <i>Alice</i> is a hot potential too.
5 8		<b>MICROSOFT</b> → No Power Meter could be complete without the ominous shadow of Uncle Bill's workhorses peering over everyone's shoulder.
6 -		<b>RED STORM</b> → Prepping for the release of <i>Rogue Spear</i> , the <i>Rainbow Six Gold Edition</i> storms the charts.
7 -		<b>INFORUMAGES</b> → Outcast ships as the French publisher begins to establish its U.S. offshoot on the back of Accolade's setup. <i>Sieve 2</i> should lead the way.
8 -		<b>LUCASARTS</b> → <i>Phantom Menace</i> and <i>Rover</i> still ride high. <i>Force Commander</i> and <i>Indiana Jones</i> are both due to arrive for the holidays.
9 6		<b>BUNGIE</b> → <i>On 2</i> already featured in PCXL and the guy behind <i>Myth</i> is working on <i>Holo</i> .
10 -		<b>OTHER CONTENDERS</b>

**FOX INTERACTIVE** → AuP has made Fox a serious player in the PC market. They look to follow that success with *Pie Head Trilogy 2*. *The Planet of the Apes* license looks excellent, too. **GT INTERACTIVE** → What happened to the former giant? All but their AAA titles have been canned, they're up for sale, morale is in the toilet. *Driver* tops the sales charts on both sides of the Atlantic.

## ALL THE THRILLS NONE OF THE SKILLS

WANNA BE LIKE THRESH?



At PCX1, we play like Thresh, but lust after babes like this.

**H**ave you ever wanted to sound like you know more about games than you really do? Have you ever tried to impress people at parties with deathmatch skills you haven't had time to develop? Would you like to gain respect from that special someone with tales of realtime strategy glory? Well, probably not, but just in case, this handy little guide will show you how.

"Course, this strategy only works in certain settings. Knowing how to find the quad damage in Q2DM6 won't make babes strip down to their underpants and do jumping jacks for you (as we've found out many, many times). And nobody ever becomes Mr. Popular due to realtime strategy ladder rankings. People just don't say 'Oh this guy's ranked #37 on Battle.net, just below Captain Colon!'"

That said, there are some advantages to being well-versed on each and every game. Here is a simple six-step plan to help you look like a gaming master without ever having to touch a game.

**Step One**

Get a basic knowledge of the concept behind your game.

**FIRST PERSON SHOOTER** →

Shoot everything between you and a colored key. Use key to open same colored door.

**REALTIME STRATEGY** → Click on your little guys and make them kill all the other little guys running around on the screen.

**Step Two**

Compare every new game to a worn-out classic. "It's just not as good as ..."

**FPS** → A. Doom, B. System Shock, C. Robot. (Bonus Points)

**RTS** → A. Warcraft II, B. the original C&C, C. Herzog Zwei. (Bonus Points)

**Step Three**

Make it sound like you've played through every single-player game. Don't worry, all games in these two genres fall under these quotes.

**FPS** → "I liked it for a while but it got monotonous near the end. The final boss was disappointing."

**RTS** → "I liked it for a while but it got monotonous near the end. The final level was disappointing."

**Step Four**

Practice your whine. "I would have won the PGL if it weren't for..."

**FPS** → A. campers, B. high ping, C. screen glare, D. a strangely extreme batch of Mountain Dew.

**RTS** → A. tank rushes, B. lag, C. bad pathfinding, D. the inexplicable disappearance of my Tony Robbins motivational tape.

**Step Five**

Share your most glorious exploit. "Once I actually ..."

**FPS** → A. finished Quake in 22 minutes, B. moved so fast I shot myself with a rail gun, C. solled myself so I wouldn't fall from #1 during a 64-player deathmatch.

**RTS** → A. won a FFA using only one unit, B. forgot to pause for dinner and still won, C. played against the NORAD Defense System ... and crushed it.

**Step Six**

Pretend to be obsessive about your game. "I once played [game X] so much that I ..."

**FPS** → A. legally changed my name to "Quake Marine," B. scoped out good camping spots at work, C. blew off my legs rocket-jumping across the parking lot.

**RTS** → A. triple-clicked desktop icons to hear something funny, B. laughed at the battle strategy in Saving Private Ryan, C. attempted a hamster rush on my cat.

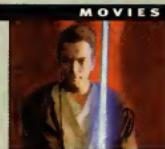
**Next Month**

If worse comes to worse, how to fake it.

## GAMESCAN

X-TRATAINMENT WEEKLY EDITION

NO NEED FOR REAL NEWS — AMERICANS WANT ENTERTAINING FLUFF STORIES ABOUT CELEBRITIES AND BOURGEOIS LIVES. X-TRATAINMENT WEEKLY IS HERE TO PROVIDE IT:



## STAR WARS: OBI-WAN

**Developer** → LucasArts

**Publisher** → LucasArts

**Release Date** → 2000

**How it will entertain** → It's a Star Wars first-person shooter in which we get to play a real ass-kicking Jedi instead of some guy named Kyle — we'll have to be as dead as Abe Vigoda not to get worked up for this. **More entertaining if** → You also got to play Darth Maul and slice and dice annoying creatures like Jar-Jar, Jake Lloyd, and Bea Arthur.



## TOMB RAIDER REVELATIONS

**Developer** → Core Design

**Publisher** → Eidos

**Release Date** → November 1999

**How it will entertain** → Eidos says the newest in the Tomb Raider series will feature seamless loading between areas, an improved interface, "skinning" technology, and a return to good gameplay — something sorely missing in *Trill*. **More entertaining if** → Lara's ponytail did more than just swing in different ways — it should be a prehensile bundle of hair, allowing her to grip cliffs and grab enemies' butts. Also, it would be cool if she were naked throughout the game.

## FREE STUFF WE KINDA LIKE

A DECADE OF THE FINEST OF THE FINE NAKED LADIES

Someone once said "You can't judge a book by its cover." We don't have a clue who said it or when those words were uttered, but we believe the same holds true for videotapes. "Playboy's Playmates of the Year: The '90s" has a cover that serves to whet the appetite for a two-hour big boob bonanza that just might hold the most titillating women of this decade — inspiration for solo perspiration.

Once you've hit the "play" button, sit back and admire this array of artsy-fartsy, over-directed video shorts. These tempresses cavort and carousel, swirl and twirl, and ensure that their perfect features are seen only in the best possible light.

Unfortunately, the director evidently decided that this bevy of beauties were more than just a bevy of airbrushed beauties. Did you know that Playmates could speak? Well, they can — a situation that only goes to prove that they shouldn't. The magic of the fantasy is lost when you have to listen to "Miss Who-Cares-When" sound off about some environmental nonsense, being kind to cats, and falling asleep at night to dreams of world peace.

We know what we want to be dreaming of as we fall asleep. So hit the mute button, don't expect anything too exciting, and doze in your own self-created fantasyland.





## THIEF 2: THE METAL AGE

Developer → Looking Glass

Publisher → Eidos

Release Date → Q1 2000

How it will entertain → Stealth-style gaming similar to the original *Thief*, (no, not the James Caan movie, the game) with improved graphics and player models. Characters now will have about 600 polys (more than double the models in the original).

More entertaining if → The game included a Wal-Mart level, in which you must sneak past a horde of red-vested morons and steal ass games like *Deer Hunter*.

## MUSIC



CLICK HERE!

## KISS - PSYCHO CIRCUS

Developer → Third Law

Publisher → Gathering of Developers

Release Date → 2000

How it will entertain → Exploring earth, air, fire, and water realms with four different KISS characters could be more fun than listening to "Rock and Roll All Night."

More entertaining if → The game shipped with giant platform shoes, fake blood, and hot chicks (like Cher) who will sleep with you — even if you look like Gene Simmons.

## TELEVISION



## DUKES OF HAZZARD

Developer → Engineering Animation

Publisher → SouthPeak Interactive

Release Date → December 1999

How it will entertain → Those of you who remember the show will know why (if this game is done right), it could be the best thing since Cinemax signed Shannon Tweed to a long-term nakedness contract (unfortunately they signed Eric Roberts instead).

More entertaining if → In the game's back story, you discovered that Daisy wasn't really your cousin, but an orphan adopted by Uncle Jesse, clearing the way for you to see what she's hiding under those shorts.

## THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

# KRISTIN

If women in the military look like this sign us up! Our babe of the month is Kristen Biggins (Pronounced "Big GUNS," not "Big-uns") and she isn't related to games or in the military — she just looks good in the uniform, don't ya think? Big bonus points to Kristen who had actually heard of our magazine — and still agreed to be on the cover. Talk about purple heart material! Considering the location of our cover shoot (Compton, CA) it was a good thing she had guns. The day-long shoot involved sweating, hiding, arousing, and we're pretty sure some smoking of one kind or another. How does she rank with other PCXL Cover babes? Send in scores and notes to myfavoritebabe@pcxl.com

### KENNE MEATIGERS

Ever since the U.S. started allowing female soldiers there has been a pretty vocal debate: Do real women soldiers look anything like Hollywood has portrayed them? We decided to see which of these camouflaged celebrity cuties made the cut.



**MILITARY BACKGROUND** → Tough-as-nails female soldier who has to learn to be a mom, despite her 101 looks.  
**PLUSSES** → Likes to work out in tight, wife-beaters, and sweat tends to glisten.  
**MINUSES** → Starved head, she'd rather kick your ass than kiss it.



**MILITARY BACKGROUND** → Airheaded but level-headed private who always managed to succeed in the military.  
**PLUSSES** → Likes men (in the female segment of the military, this is a rare thing!) and she's a natural of guns, can't do push-ups, and fuck is bound to run out.



**MILITARY BACKGROUND** → Was tied down and raped by entire Band of brothers, but crossover to the military made her keep it hush-hush.  
**PLUSSES** → She's into kinky sex with anonymous soldiers.  
**MINUSES** → She's THE BOMBERAL'S DAUGHTER, FOOL!



**MILITARY BACKGROUND** → Brave captain who faced a mutiny in her squad and got out.  
**PLUSSES** → Meg Ryan's just so gosh-darn cute.  
**MINUSES** → Poor decision-making, tends to break down in tears whenever things start to go bad.

# The Virtual Job

PLAY PROFESSIONAL EVERQUEST — AND MAKE A LIVING

**S**o the girlfriend's kicked you out. She refuses to compete with Ariella Bigjugs, the wood elven ranger you went on moonlit walks with on the shores of the ocean. And the fact that you're a master jeweler? Who cares when she doesn't have a rock the size of your head on her finger. So, you've got no job, no prospects, and no girlfriend... how do you climb back up the socioeconomic ladder? How about turning those vast hours of *Everquest* play into cold, hard cash? Then, armed with the attendant luxuries that a carefree existence in a virtual world brings, you could go back to the real world with head held high (unless some noisy bastard asks what it is that you do for a living).

Online auction site eBay has made all this possible. Just go there and do a search on *Everquest* and look at the lots on offer. Everything from 50pp on a new server to the bad-ass Ghoulbaine is available if you're willing to stump up some cash. Always looking for the easiest way to make money without actually "working," PCXL felt obliged to investigate how to turn an *Everquest* addiction into an overall Internet business.

## EBAY TIPS

Selling stuff on eBay? Here's how to make the most of what you've got

### SMALL LOTS

Don't sell your platinum pieces in one huge chunk. If you have 500pp in one bank, split it into five lots of 100. People are more likely to bid up a 50pp lot than break the bank for 500. Example: At press time, a 50pp lot on eBay was sold for about \$4.00. Several lots of 100 were selling for anything up to \$3.00 each. Do the math.

### UNIQUE ITEMS

As each game server matures, there's more value in hard-to-find or unique items. Focus your efforts on acquiring such items (by killing whatever spawns them, or completing the quest that supplies them), they're worth more as items than cash, should you sell them in the game.

### ACCOUNTS

Should all else fail, and you have to get a real life, selling your account is the last resort. Accounts that have characters withsmithing, Jewelry, and fleshing (yes, that really is a word in the world of EQ) skills are worth considerably more than those with just high level characters and familiar items

As with all businesses, you can choose to be a small mom and pop shop or go for it all and start a giant corporation. The key to mass riches is to be a master smith or master jeweler. Attaining master smith level will take an investment of about 200 to 500pp of yield around 500pp per suit of banded armor. Always hit new servers and build there — there's so much twinkling (players with high level characters passing their unneeded equipment to new players) on the existing servers that the potential for new businesses is limited. Getting to master jeweler level costs 1000 to 1500pp, but earnings can hit up to 5000pp a week. Jewelry also has more longevity on established servers. Employ low-level characters to do the running and fetching for raw materials while you do the wheeling and dealing.



This could be your staff on their coffee break. And we thought the PCXL Christmas party was crazy!

## ALTERNATIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

You're in a bar and Hot Chick, attracted by your suave demeanor, starts making the moves, and you just know you're in. Until the sledgehammer falls... "So what is it you do for a living?" she purrs. "Professional Everquest player" is going to land you with a visit to Mrs. Parker and her five sisters. Best get the patter down — so try these...

### "MASTER JEWELER"

Should this fleeting rendezvous actually turn into something more serious, this is one that you might be able to bluff for the long term. Only after gaining her complete confidence, can you hope that she might tilt playfully at the speed of your wit if you confess the truth.

Everquest account level 40 druid					
Item #138821627					
Computer Software/General					
Currently	\$3,050.00	First bid	\$450.00		
Quantity	1	# of bids	13 (1st bid: 1000 (with email))		
Time left	10 hours, 57 minutes +	Location	Vancouver, BC		
Started	07/29/99, 01:17:21 PDT	Buyout	Used this auction to a friend		
Ends	08/01/99, 01:17:21 PDT		(Request a gift alert)		

Everquest: Level 50 Paladin on Fenin Ro					
Item #142597655					
Computer Software/General					
Currently	\$3,500.00 (Request bid)	First bid	\$500.00		
Quantity	1	# of bids	11 (1st bid: 1000 (with email))		
Time left	1 day, 1 hours +	Location	Miami, FL		
Started	08/01/99, 15:36:42 PDT	Buyout	(Used this auction to a friend)		
Ends	08/10/99, 15:36:42 PDT		(Request a gift alert)		

EverQuest: Alethela Ivl 50 Cleric on E'd					
Item #41265401					
Computer Software/General					
Currently	\$5,000.00	First bid	\$2,000.00		
Quantity	1	# of bids	15 (1st bid: 1000 (with email))		
Time left	3 days, 7 hours +	Location	E'dai Server		
Started	08/01/99, 21:45:15 PDT	Buyout	(Used this auction to a friend)		
Ends	08/12/99, 21:45:15 PDT		(Request a gift alert)		

To Hell with you guys. Why should we put out this damn rag when we could (in theory) make this kinda dough?

## Business Models

CURRENT EQ EXCHANGE RATE 8PP = \$1 (Oddly, more than Pesos)

### Small business

EMPLOYEES → A few low level scrubs you pay with EQ money — 25pp a month  
 INVESTMENT → 500pp to become master jeweler or to save time just buy an account on eBay for around \$600  
 CONNECTION → \$19.99 a month  
 INCOME → 500pp a week  
 HOURS → 40 / 60 / week  
 WEEKLY EARNINGS → \$625  
 MONTHLY EARNINGS → \$2460  
 YEARS PROFITS (expenses) → \$30,000

### Everquest Inc.

EMPLOYEES → Start with six master jewelers who you can pay \$20,000 a year to play EQ, you can keep track of funds, trends, and generally perform sleazy duties  
 INVESTMENT → \$10 computers with 3D cards, 56K modems, and Everquest, plus monthly bills (approx. \$9,000)  
 WEEKLY EARNINGS → \$2460  
 MONTHLY EARNINGS → \$15,000  
 YEARLY EXPENSES → \$129,000  
 PROFITS → \$58,500

## How to become the next Amazon.com

Go public as the only Internet start-up which makes a profit, become a billionnaire, then shut down and marry playmate with extremely large breasts.

"PCXL accepts no responsibility for lost earnings, lost love, sunton, and friends should you attempt this. Remember that if you do, there's one thing you'll definitely never lose — and it begins with a 'v.'"



## DEVIL INSIDE

**Developer** → Gamesquad/Cryo  
**Publisher** → Cryo Interactive  
**Release Date** → Late 1999  
**How it will entertain** → An action/adventure game from the creator of the classic *Above in the Dark*, with an odd story line featuring a character working on a TV show, who is able to change from a man to a woman. Weird, huh?  
**More entertaining if** → We didn't know the developer was French



## WHEEL OF TIME

**Developer** → Legend Entertainment  
**Publisher** → GT Interactive  
**Release Date** → Late 1999  
**How it will entertain** → This 3D action/strategy title, based on the Robert Jordan fantasy novels, already looks incredible. With Legend's ability to create stunning worlds and some RPG elements thrown in, this is a game to watch  
**More entertaining if** → Legend put more ice cream power-ups in the game. Everybody loves ice cream



## TRICKSTYLE

**Developer** → Criterion Studios  
**Publisher** → Acclaim  
**Release Date** → Fall 1999  
**How it will entertain** → Though it is a Dreamcast port, this futuristic hoverboard racing game is one of the best looking games currently headed to the PC. It's gorgeous and fast, but the question is, will it also be fun?  
**More entertaining if** → There was a back-in-time level allowing players to go back to the 1999 X-Games to slice the heads off modern-day skateboarders, a far-sharp hoverboard, before they have a chance to reach for a Mountain Dew

## FANTASY Quake II

THE ULTIMATE QUAKE MANAGEMENT SIM — ALSO THE ONLY ONE

**Y**ou've seen *Fontosy Base-ball* and *Football*, and, if you're geeky enough, you may have even played in a league. Now for the first time ever, **PCXL** has made it possible to draft and manage a team of the world's most average Quake players — the **PCXL** staff. In an effort to allow our readers the chance to be a part of the **PCXL** office environment (and a really good excuse to continue playing *Quake II* on a daily basis) we present *Fontosy Quake II*:

## The Draft

The key to any fantasy league is the draft and *FQII* is no different. There are two ways to play: Either you play exclusive players or exclusive teams. Exclusive player can be played with two to four people who draft according to a coin toss (or dwarf toss if possible — it's just darn fun to throw midgets). The exclusive teams game can be played with two to eight players. Whoever wins the coin toss picks what they feel is the best player combination, now whoever drafts after them cannot pick the same combo. There are no limits on number of players per team, but a \$45 price ceiling will keep teams fair.

To give you an idea of how it works (and because we're addicted to games and gambling as a combo) we've each drafted our own dream team of "Quakers" (no, not William Penn) and played one week to show the results.

## The Season

The regular season officially begins in August with five matches per week. The stats will be posted every Friday ([www.pcxl.com](http://www.pcxl.com)) and updated monthly in the magazine. You can start your own league at any point in the season by just using the weekly totals from the time you start.

All league matches take place on The Edge and The Frag Pipe and will be officially scored by an independent law firm (or Philip, whoever's cheaper, so to speak). Good luck, and let us know how your league is doing by writing us at [faq@pcxl.com](mailto:faq@pcxl.com)

## The Players

## ED LEE

**HANDLE** → PCXL Glock-Glock **COST** → \$12

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Ed is a railgun expert who loves to prey on newbies. In the preseason he averaged 30.7 points a game and consistently finishes in the top two

**INSIDER TIP** → The league games are held at 12:00 PM PST and Ed tends to sleep in — if he misses a league game, you get o points

## ROB SMITH

**HANDLE** → PCXL Blade **COST** → \$33

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Rob is the consummate professional and currently the league's top-rated player with a 33.3 avg per game

**INSIDER TIP** → There is talk around the league that Rob's good years are behind him and that his aging reflexes can't possibly keep up his 33.3 average

## MIKE SALMON

**HANDLE** → PCXL Hammer **COST** → \$27

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Mike is the most unpredictable player in the league and the only player capable of finishing in first place one game and in dead last the next. His 26.75 avg per game is third in the league, but you never know whether good Mike or dreadfully bad Mike is going to show up

**INSIDER TIP** → Because of his psychotic playstyle, Mike will tend to get plenty of blaster kills and double kills, but his incessant whining shouldn't be overlooked

## CHUCK OSBORN

**HANDLE** → PCXL Deadmeal **COST** → \$19

**SCOUTING REPORT** → When he first started playing he was known as "My Kill" Osborn. However this preseason Chuck managed a healthy average of 19.4 points a game

**INSIDER TIP** → Chuck has a computer which often keeps him out of games due to bad connections — so he's calm

## DAN EGGER

**HANDLE** → PCXL JKIR **COST** → \$14

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Dan is mostly insane and it shows up in his Quake game. His 14 per game average is solid, but his propensity for losing focus is a major concern

**INSIDER TIP** → This soon-to-be betrothed freak is the league's worst lava player, by far, so while the cost is mid-range, the risk is top of the line

## THE SCORING

ACTION	POINTS
Kill	+1
First Place	+2
Second Place	+1
Third Place	+1
Double Kill	+2
Blaster Kill	+1
Whining	-1
Triple Kill	+6
First blood	+1
Last dead	-1
Best, lousy, taunt	+4

## MIKE MORRISSEY

**HANDLE** → PCXL Scoops **COST** → \$8

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Not much is known about this enigmatic player

**INSIDER TIP** → Scoops is a gamble, but for an \$8 price tag he could be the best buy in the draft — or the worst

## ERIC SMITH

**HANDLE** → PCXL Boba Fett **COST** → \$5

**SCOUTING REPORT** → The first of the "Mac Two Pack," Eric is starting to learn the maps and intricacies of *Quake II*, but his skills in FPS games make him an interesting pick despite his 5.4 per game average

**INSIDER TIP** → A foul-mouthed whiner who is always the last pick, one fear that Eric may quit the league

## KYLE LEBOEUF

**HANDLE** → PCXL Buster **COST** → \$5

**SCOUTING REPORT** → Another Mac'er who is quite new in the QW world, Kyle is a low-priority gamble who has shown some decent Tribes kills, but his negative scores in the first week could hurt

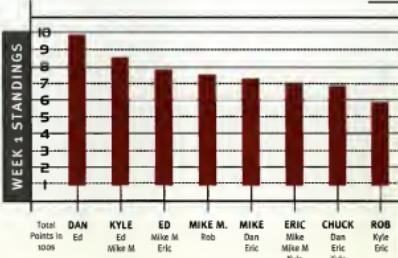
**INSIDER TIP** → On deadline weeks, Kyle tends to spend the entire night in the office, sitting up on coffee. His chemical dependency on hair dye often affects his decision-making skills, too. There is really no telling what the result could be

## WEEK 1 INDIVIDUAL SCORES

Rob →	64	Ed →	66
Mike S. →	43	Dan →	33
Chuck →	28	Mike M. →	12
Kyle →	8	Eric →	DNP

## THE LEAGUE

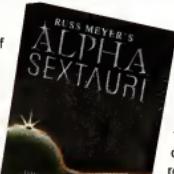
Our draft and league are set up to show you just how to start your own league. The rules in our draft meant that each manager had to pick himself on his own team to prevent any tampering or cheating. To make things more interesting, each manager pays \$45 into a pot which will be split up by the top three spots in the league (200, 100, 60). Here are the teams and the Week One standings.



## PCXL CONTEST WINNERS

YOU TOO CAN BE A WINNER,  
OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

**T**he votes are in (or in a couple of instances, "vote"), and here are the winners of three of our most recent contests. PCXL readers have consistently amazed us with their enthusiastic apathy, and this round of contests was no disappointment. We're not sure if it's because of the "quotes" around "Fabulous Prizes," (implying a questionable sense of fabu-



losity), difficulty level of the contests (doubtful, since most of our contests require little more than a one-word response — we'd like to think our readers aren't that stupid), or just overall laziness (obviously the most likely) amongst our readership. But we'd really like to hear more from you lethargic bastards. So watch closely for contests and mini-contests planted throughout PCXL in the coming months. When you pop in that stunning new version of *Recoil* or don that "My Geeky Co-



(L) The winner of our Best Babe Contest. (R) The winner of the *Diablo II* Gaming Weekend discovers he must hang out with Dan.

GAME KILLER  
THE BAD DISC PROJECT

**I**n August 1999, three PCXL editors disappeared in the woods. Four days later these photos were found.

**1998** → Four people die a hideous and gruesome death while playing a game called *Necrophellus*. A frightened community forces the game into the woods, ties it to a tree, and sets it ablaze. Before its obliteration, the game warns that it will come back in many forms to terrorize their descendants.

**1999** → In midwinter all the township's children vanish. Fearing a curse, the residents all format their hard drives. A few days later the entire town is coated in slime and round wooden CD towers.

**1999** → The *Necrophellus* is published. The book, commonly considered fiction, tells of an entire town terrorized by an evil game.

**1999** → Eleven witnesses testify to seeing a young girl get pulled into nearby "Dawson's Creek" by a skeletal disc. A search party goes to look for the missing girl. Later they are found with their throats cut and strange round glyphs carved into their foreheads.

**1999** → EA releases *Skydive*. Recognizing its true nature as the incarnation of pure evil, PCXL editors Ed Lee, Chuck Osborn, and Mike Salmon set out to destroy the game for good with the intention of saying its true name, *Necrophellus*, three times to banish it to Hell. They are never seen again. The remaining PCXL editors make millions from these cheaply-shot photos.

losity), difficulty level of the contests (doubtful, since most of our contests require little more than a one-word response — we'd like to think our readers aren't that stupid), or just overall laziness (obviously the most likely) amongst our readership. But we'd really like to hear more from you lethargic bastards. So watch closely for contests and mini-contests planted throughout PCXL in the coming months. When you pop in that stunning new version of *Recoil* or don that "My Geeky Co-

Workers Went to E3 and All I Got Was This Lousy T-shirt" T-shirt, you'll be glad you did.

## Fake Ad Contest

**WINNER** → Brandon Fisher  
**QUOTE** → "Your bogus ad is on page 34, issue 11, and is an ad for the game *Alpha Sextaury*. There, I did all that. So where's my fabulous prize?"

**WHAT WE WANTED TO GIVE HIM** → Some marketing chick's back brace and Kyle's unused blue PRIZE

**FABULOUS PRIZE** → A copy of *Recoil*

## Best Babe Contest

**WINNER** → Mima Blankenship=heverhernameis (Pnny) (5.2 million)

**2ND PLACE** → Kristy Hothalhakedchic (no known game relation) (1 million)

**3RD PLACE** → Nell McAndrew (Lara) (2)

**QUOTE** → "... gee, thanks. Now who are you again?"

**WHAT WE WANTED TO GIVE HER** → Uh ... I think you can probably guess this one

**FABULOUS PRIZE** → A copy of *Recoil* and all our home phone numbers

## Diablo II Gaming Weekend

**WINNERS** →

Jan Lester N Martinez of Houston, TX

Adam Ridley of Cairo, GA

Peter Norby of San Mateo, CA

Karen Cherne of Coon Rapids, MN

Roger Doerfler of Indianapolis, IN

Mark L. Johnson of St. Louis, MO

**QUOTE** → "Without a real prize! Wait a minute, nobody said anything about hanging out with Dan Egger!"

**WHAT WE WANTED TO GIVE 'EM** → Dan Egger and Ed Lee

**FABULOUS PRIZE** → A weekend of *Diablo II* in San Francisco (and a copy of *Recoil*)



"I'm so scared ... of bad games. I'm scared of being on time ... and Brits. What was that?"



## GAMESCAN



## PLANET RACER

**Developer** → Human Soft

**Publisher** → TBA

**Release Date** → 2000

**How It Will Entertain** → A futuristic racer set in 2065. The player must race across the various wastelands of Earth for the benefit of "multi-national corporations"

**More Entertaining If** → The same hackneyed back story hadn't been used for hundreds of games and movies already. We want a racer set in a smiling future filled with idyllic poppy fields



## SPLINTER

**Developer** → Stromlo

**Publisher** → TBA

**Release Date** → 2000

**How It Will Entertain** → A *Descent*-like 3D flying game in which your ship has been miniaturized and must fight its way through the now-giant world and its "monsters" like wasps and scorpions

**More Entertaining If** → The final boss were Emmanuel Lewis, who would now be taller than the Eiffel Tower and more frightening than a Yahoo Serious Film Festival



## SIM MARS

**Developer** → Maxis

**Publisher** → EA

**Release Date** → 2000

**How It Will Entertain** → Colonize a piece of Mars by deciding what to launch from Earth, where to mine, and what to build once you establish your base on the Red Planet, then build those small colonies into larger cities. **More Entertaining If** → When you landed, you fought the hostile inhabitants of Mars, who spit acid, devoured human flesh, and worst of all, looked like Larry King



## EVOLVE

Developer → Computer Arts

Publisher → Interplay

Release Date → Q3 2000

How it will entertain → Evolve uses a funky mix of third-person and team action, allowing players to use anybody on their team at any time. Creatures you kill while playing can also be incorporated into your team members' DNA, allowing your characters to evolve throughout the game. More entertaining if → You evolved to the highest level of creature, only to find yourself turned into M.C. Hammer. They could also slightly change the name by removing the "E" and replacing the "O" with a "U"



## SWAT 3: CLOSE QUARTER BATTLE

Developer → Sierra Northwest

Publisher → Sierra Studios

Release Date → Q4 1999

How it will entertain → A graphically impressive Rainbow Six-style tactical shooter that will rely more on player instinct during action than pre-mission planning. More entertaining if → The funky-ass music from the '90s show, "S.W.A.T.," is played while we beat the snot out of PC Gomer in multi-player

## OFFICE QUOTES

"I was hoping it might be funny this time!"

— Rob Smith talking about Saving Jeri Ryan

"I've got Dan's piece in my hands and I'm polishing it right now!"

— Chuck Osborn about Dan's editorial contribution to X-tro this month

"Is that a split shine?"

— Eric Smith to Chuck

"All they need is a little attention!"

— Model Kristin talking about her nipples

"I think it works on Macs better because our balls are heavier."

— Kyle Leboeuf talking about shifty mouse pads and PC mice

"Hey, am I a girl?"

— PCXL salesperson Andy Swanson, questioning the gender of his character in Kingpin

## The Heat-O-Meter

DIS IS WHAT WE'RE TALKIN' 'BOUT

## WHAT'S HOT

**GAME RIDES** → French company Infogrames is set to start developing theme park rides based on some of their most popular games like *Independence War* and *Alone In The Dark*. This is their revenge for EuroDisney, right?

**RUN, JANET RENO, RUN** → Microsoft has collaborated with Zipper Interactive on their *Bottle Tech Universe* — not for gaming, but for advice on Microsoft's ongoing legal problems with the Department Of Justice.

**BODY LICENSES!** → Acclaim Studios' Stroud is a brand-new UK division of the popular game company. The rush to license European cartoons like "Tin-Tin" and "Asterix" for first-person shooter games has already begun.

**IS THAT A SOLID SNAKE IN YOUR PORT ...** → *Metal Gear Solid* will make its way to the PC sometime next year courtesy of Microsoft. How and what route it takes is on a need to know" basis.

**... OR ARE YOU JUST HAPPY TO SEE ME?** → *Lost Coll*, a bartending sim, will be released in October — for the five people who don't see enough obnoxious drunks in real life.

**Q3TEST** → It could very well be the best game you never paid for. But will it be a *Quake III* killer?

## WHAT'S COLD

**LOST THE MAGIC** → It's official: Interactive Magic is no more. Changing its name to the *Entertainment Network*, the company has expanded its focus to broad-based online content like game hints and e-commerce. It's good to see they've moved to a market that's not quite so competitive.

**WIPEOUT 3** → The new sequel will appear only on the Playstation. Console owners must enjoy bad garage band techno-rock more than their PC counterparts.

**SKYDIVE!** → A skydiving title for the PC has been released by Electronic Arts. Along with HeadGames, they hope to prove beyond a doubt that any sport can be boring when played on a computer.

**GT INTERACTIVE** → After losing \$50 million, the company is now up for sale. We hope whichever French company buys it will be very happy.

**CAT SCRATCH FEVER** → *Ted Nugent's Wild Hunting Adventure* will rock its way to the PC this fall. The title features music, commentary, bad gameplay, and politically incorrect statements from the camouflaged rocker himself — the term "Motor City Madman" has never seemed more appropriate.

## PCXL MONITOR

**EXPECTING** → Steve Smith of the Atlanta Hawks and his new partner, FoxSports, have reportedly signed a deal to bring a new arena this fall. The two sportsmen have christened their little one NBA Basketball 2000. Smith led the Hawks in scoring, free-throw percentage, three-point percentage, and anonymity for the past several years. While Fox Sports has been notorious for siring such offspring, this will be Smith's first.

**WEDDINGS** → After a patent-infringement lawsuit threatened to keep the couple apart forever, graphics chipmaker Nvidia and computer graphics company SGI finally tied the knot in July. Both companies agreed to keep the wedding a secret, including holding a ceremony in an undisclosed location. Previously, SGI had filed a lawsuit against Nvidia claiming patent infringement, but it "made more sense to work together" said a spokesperson for the lovebirds. The happy couple went on honeymoon immediately after the ceremony, eager to "leverage each other's strengths" as soon as possible.

**SPLITS** → Director of Development Steve Dauterman, and longtime employer LucasArts have divorced due to "irreconcilable differences." The couple were insepara-

ble after meeting over so years ago, during which time they produced several children (X-Wing Rebels, Grim Fandango, etc.). The decision to leave the company was made "for me personally," said Dauterman, who will move to Australia in September to closer to new squeeze EA Australia ... The maker of the Intensity Gaming Chair has ditched its old name BSG Labs for the more pretentious moniker Imeron. The former BSG Labs hopes that its new name will make it more attractive to its target demographic — people who like uncomfortable chairs that make noises.

**MILESTONES** → One man has accomplished what most people can't — Bill Mitchell, 33, reached a perfect score of 3,333,360 on the original *Pac-Man*. Mitchell never had to play that game again. "I never had to play that game again," Mitchell said with relief. While the rest of the world lost interest in munching ghosts 15 years ago, Mitchell honed his skill in following repetitive patterns in hopes of becoming the Neil Armstrong of *Pac-Man*. Says a teary-eyed Mitchell, "There's nothing more I can accomplish."

**DEALS** → Super-strong publisher THQ has purchased 6.25 million shares of Interplay

## WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GAME INDUSTRY

common stock, giving it a 57 percent stake in the company. Lackluster game sales, lackluster games, and cash-strapped publishers contributed to the industry's financial vulnerability ... Gaming giant Activision will publish UK-based Codemaster's games in the United States. *TG14's Touring Cars, Prince Nissens Boxing, Music 2000, and No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking* are part of the deal with additional, and equally forgettable, titles possible in the future ... Indie-publisher THQ has partnered with Descent FreeSpace developer Volition to bring the world a new fantasy role-playing game, *Summoner*, set for release in next fall, follows a young farmer who inherits the power to summon demons. In a related story, Williie Nelson has added "summoning demons" to the list of concerns that Farm Aid MCXXXIII will address.

**ARRESTS** → Ultima Online employee Kevin Roseler (aka *GW Darwin*) has been relieved of his duties by Origin Systems after it was discovered that he was using his "god"-like abilities to create virtual gold and houses for sale in the real world via eBay. Britannia authorities declined to comment on legal actions taken against Roseler, but he has been banished from the countryside instead of dungeon incarceration.



## FEEDBACK

letters@pcxl.com

Well, another month's gone by and you know what that means — somebody's really pissed off at us. Lucky for us, that's a sure sign that we're doing our jobs correctly. Besides, it's all meant in fun, right? Right? At any rate, drop us a line and tell us what you think at [letters@pcxl.com](mailto:letters@pcxl.com). And remember, wordiness isn't a virtue and probably won't get your letter printed ... unless you're obese big-boned.

## WHO YOU CALLING FATTY?

Today, I got calls from several of my friends to tell me that they had received the new issue of your magazine and that my picture was in it. At first I was thrilled, as would anyone, at being in a magazine. Then my excitement turned to anger. If you have not figured it out yet I am the "Fatty with the gun." Every time I think of that phrase it really pisses me off. Do any of you know me?? Work with me? Who the hell are you to judge, and denounce me? I guess everyone that works at your magazine are all perfect human beings, working part-time as million-dollar models. In closing I had a great time at E3, met a bunch of people who were not close-minded assholes. I would like to thank your magazine for ruining all that with your great caption. I hope you have the guts to print this, although I know you won't.

Richard "Fatty" Martinez

Yes, we do have the guts. And judging from your picture, with all due respect, so do you.



"Fatty" Chuck with a hottie.

## DOIN' IT FOR MANHOOD

Reading PCXL has encouraged me to do my part to help humanity. While walking through our local bookstore with my friend I noticed the magazine section, and how the majority of magazines are devoted to women, with articles like "1000 ways to tell if your man is cheating." These can't possibly help mankind, can they? So I took it upon myself to hide them. What did I hide them behind? The bookstore's entire stock of PCXL. I'm just glad that I was able to do my part to help mankind.

Muhammad Ali-Babba

(sniff) It's tales of bravery and self-sacrifice like this that keep us going. Speaking on behalf of mankind, "You're the shit."

## PISSIN' HIS LIFE AWAY

I used to be a subscriber to PC Gomes and was very p.o.'ed when I found out that they had been bought out! So I called the "dood's" at PC Gomes and they told me I would be getting your mag instead as a replacement. I almost pissed my pants! PCXL RULES! But ... the month I was supposed to receive my PCXL mag, I got a frickin' PC GAMER! What's goin' on here? I'm being tortured by reading this boring B.S. What gives guys?

Cmndr. Akula

Okay, here's the deal — if you didn't already subscribe to PC Gamer, then you got a subscription to them, but if you already did, then you got us. We don't know why it worked out that way, but we think it's because that weird Coconut Monkey runs the circulation department.

## THE HALL OF DEATH

I just want to throw a monster "two thumbs up" to you guys for your E3 article in the August '99 issue. I believe it's the most accurate depiction the show that I've read. I especially liked the advice of not getting caught in the secondary products hall, or "the dark side" as I officially dubbed it after my first show in 1997. There is nothing quite like the experience of being physically pulled into the booth of GodHelpUs, Inc. and having some useless peripheral thrust into my frightened hands by an overly excited representative. I've actually seen some of them drool at the sight of a press badge.

Rich

That's why we thought Kentia Hall was short for "Kentia get into the other hall?" It's a relief to find out that it was only drool — we thought it was the gummy slime they use in roach motels to keep us from leaving.

## WACKY MIXUPS

After months of buying the CD edition of PCXL, I noticed the "naked" edition, bought it, and returned home to enjoy ... but much to my dismay, the chicks were just as clothed as in the "non-naked" edition. That is blatant false advertising! Cosmo shows nips, so why can't you?

WJ Blanton  
Dallas, TX

To the many, many readers who have asked us this question: The "Naked Edition" means it comes without a CD. Frankly, even if Cosmo Kramer did show nips on "Seinfeld," what does that have to do with us? That's gross!

## YOU'RE HOLDING IT

I know it's going to happen, so I'm gonna ask in advance. When is the swimsuit issue of PC Accelerator due out?

The Dawg

The swimsuit issue? We thought they all were! (see upper right)



Congratulations on buying PCXL's 14th consecutive swimsuit issue.

## DAN BANNED

Hey, is Dan really gone? Who shall we mock when a woman brings our self-esteem to the floor? Who shall we force to bring us ass-colas? Who shall be forced to go hours on end entertaining shitty games on dates? Oh, hey ... Rob!

Limpy

We like the way you think, Limpy (although your name is quite disturbing). But to be honest, after much debate, the new lacky's gonna be big-boned Chuck.

## THE DEAD ROM SKETCH

Does anyone that works over there at PCXL admit to using emulators and ROMs?

Nate

Who, us? Never! (wink, wink) Why, that would be illegal unless you already owned the game you were playing. (nudge, nudge) And we certainly don't condone that sort of behavior. (say no more)

THREE IDIOTS AND NO AI  
I need serious help. I have three friends that each got a completely crappy game and like it! One of my friends got Deer Hunter, another got 'Nom, and one of my friends got Extreme Paintbrawl! Can you suggest any sort of counseling for them?

Fireburner

Nope, it's too late. Time to get new friends.

# Gaming 411

These sponsors make it possible for PC ACCELERATOR to exist. Without them we'd just be a bunch of loud-mouthed fools. We appreciate their advertising, but if they make a game that sucks, we WILL kill it. Nobody owns PCXL, but PCXL.

Follow these three easy steps to get all the product information you desire!

- 1 Go to: <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>
- 2 Select the product category from a complete list. Search by name, or select the vendor's number from the list below for up-to-date info on your favorite games.
- 3 Follow the format to receive all the info you desire. You will also be able to access the vendor's websites from Gaming 411.

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# WWW.PCXL.COM

## YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT (BUT, THEN AGAIN, NEITHER DO WE)

**DAILY NEWS**

**THE WAY WE SEE IT**

November 17th, 1996  
Updated Daily (M-F) By IPMan (PST)

**What's New** To Include "Action Pool Parties" (sic) - "I think there's no room for us in the market."

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## Get your conspiring hand out of my pocket!

**R**emember getting all goose pimply about the power of 3D cards? It was back in the days when *Quake* didn't look much better than watching Sea Monkeys in a grainy mud puddle, and 3D was going to be the salvation of PC gaming — the salve for our pixels and framerate wounds. 3Dfx almost single-handedly created a whole new market, and the gaming world followed onward and upward: Voodoo, Voodoo, Voodoo Banshee (well, for every two steps up, there's always a Chevy Chase-style stumble down a flight of stairs).

But more and more these days, 3D card companies are pushing their luck and chasing the buck, more concerned with cornering the market and hoarding cash than advancing

the technology that pushes our hobby forward. Suddenly, 3D cards are more salt in the wound than salve, and the 3D makers are hardly even trying to hide their greed.

Take 3Dfx's recent announcement of the Voodoo4. This card, they tell us, will be the next big leap forward, the technology that shoves gaming into the next millennium and beyond. It's a used car salesman spiel we might believe, if we hadn't heard the same blather six months ago, when the Voodoo3 was announced.

In talking about the Voodoo4 recently, a 3Dfx bligwig said the card's T-Buffer technology "represents the next step in advancing the quality and performance of 3D graphics on the mainstream PC desktop." So suddenly, the Voodoo3 I depleted my savings on just a couple months ago sprouts a giant "Sega 32X" label and begins to take on the lifespan of a new ABC sitcom starring Molly Ringwald? And I'm supposed to be happy about this?

I understand that PC technology moves fast — I can live with that.

What makes it tougher to swallow is the sheer market manipulation of these manufacturers, and not just 3Dfx. Can you — or they — honestly tell me that they didn't have Z-Bump-T-Render-Robot-ization technology ready to go and in the pipeline when the Voodoo3 and TNT2's were on the drawing board? Of course they did!

Pausing through the nose for new cards and features separated by a couple months is when I start to get suspicious. As Oliver Stone would surely tell us if he played PC games (or were still sane): "Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean 3D makers aren't out to get you." I've already been "got" once, but darned if those jack-booted thugs will do it again. I'll be in my concrete bomb shelter until Y2K passes over, happily playing games on my woefully inadequate Voodoo3, and blissfully ignorant of the Voodoo6000 and TNT4, which I'm sure will be out by January 1, 2000.

— MIKE "UNA-3D-BOMBER" MORRISSEY



Morrissey says, "Voodoo Schmoodoo! I can still kick Darth Steve's ass with a V3."

## NEXT MONTH?

## Bigger, Better, Faster Games for Drunks

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Watch, learn, and listen as we build the ultimate aforde for gaming, drinking, and generally having a good time on the company dime.

## DRINKING AND DIABLO II

The lucky winners of our *PCXL/Diablo II* contest get flown out to foggy Northern California, put up in a hotel, force-fed liquor, then beta-test *Diablo II*. Find out how many geeks fall by the wayside, and which PCXL staffer will make the moves on our lone female contest winner.

## A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU

As Thanksgiving approaches, PCXL is ready to pass out thank you's to the lovely ladies. Here are three such ladies: Thank you, thank you, and THANK YOU.



## SECOND PERSON

Morrissey, you simple-minded dolt, I am ashamed to share the same first name with such a back-ass-wards luddite. I suppose you were against sliced bread, fried cheese, wetnaps, cable, the Internet, porn on the Internet, and the almighty remote control as well? Blasphemer!

If it weren't for advancing technology your whiney little ass wouldn't have a job. I applaud 3Dfx and Nvidia for continually raising the technology bar in gaming. Each time a new chipset comes out the games look better, move faster, and generally deliver a more compelling, involving, and fun experience.

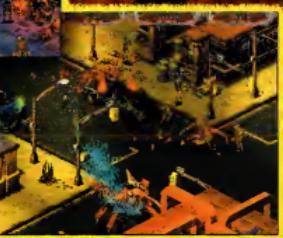
Just because the Voodoo4 is coming out doesn't mean you have to buy it. The Voodoo3 will still be a perfectly viable 3D card for at least another year. The worst part of your argument is that when the Voodoo4 comes into our office you'll be like a little baby to get the card in your machine. And when you do, I'm going to pull out this column, rub it in your face, and donate that Voodoo4 to someone who will appreciate it.

— MIKE "QUIT YER BITCHING" SALMON



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